

A STORE YET UNTOUCHED:  
SPECULATIVE IDEOLOGIES IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH  
LITERATURE

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This dissertation explores the ways in which attacks on speculative practices articulated in the financial literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were revised and reformulated in the literary productions of eighteenth-century English fiction writers. The title of this dissertation derives from William Hazlitt's remark that the "past is...like money that is spent," while the future "is like a store yet untouched, and in the enjoyment of which we promise ourselves infinite gratification" ("On the Past and Future"). Hazlitt's figuration of time as money refers us to an important historical connection between England's revolutionized financial order and alterations in the individual's relationship to futurity. The financial revolution, as P.G.M. Dickson famously styled it, brought the British a new sense of the individual's control over his or her material destiny in the temporal order of things; and the challenge it posed to a Providentialist view of history was addressed and negotiated by countless literary texts of the period in explicit or implicit fashion. Rather than sidestepping the vexing theoretical problem of how a revolution could be said to exist independently of the discourse that names it so, this dissertation argues that the historically significant fictional discourses of the eighteenth century acted to mark the historical moment as one particularly interested in the status of the forward-looking (often explicitly financial) subject. Ascertaining how texts of this period established ethical distinctions between prudential foresight and "scheming" offers a new way of understanding the

development of eighteenth-century fiction as well as the broader cultural narratives from which those fictions drew energy and, indeed, a readership. The carving of ethical space for the speculative subject, one who was forward-looking without being either presumptuous or manipulative, is shown to be a central moral concern and literary opportunity for writers such as Daniel Defoe, Richard Steele, Alexander Pope, Eliza Haywood, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, and Samuel Johnson.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dwight Douglas Codr was born in 1975 in Norfolk, Nebraska to Joseph and Pearl Codr. His early education took place at Seedling Mile Elementary school in nearby Grand Island, where he would occasionally bump into his sister, Stacie. At the age of ten, his family moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where he attended McKinley Middle School and George Washington High School. It was at the latter that he became simultaneously involved in philosophy and interscholastic policy debate, which led the late Paul Slappey, former director of the A. Craig Baird Debate Forum, to offer him a scholarship at the University of Iowa, which he attended after graduation. After meandering through several majors, including Economics and Philosophy, he was introduced to the world of letters by Professor Cheryl Herr and Associate Professor Robert Latham, who encouraged a philosophical investigation into literature that has remained with him ever since. He came to Cornell University in 1998 intending to study Early Modern English Literature, but was drawn into studies of the Enlightenment after seminars directed by Associate Professor Neil Saccamano, Professor Laura Brown, and Professor Rick Bogel revealed points of contact between philosophy, economics, and literature particularly well-suited to his interests and background. Contemporaneous investigations of gambling, risk, finance, and theology undertaken with Will Hacker, Marlon Kuzmick, Niels Buch-Jepsen, and other colleagues helped him to contextualize the research presented in his dissertation. He received his M.A. in English in 2002 and his Ph.D. in English in 2006. He is currently an Assistant Professor of English Literature at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana.

To students of the Future

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Determining who to thank for support and encouragement during the course of writing a dissertation is far more difficult than actually writing it, as one is trying to be inclusive enough to acknowledge all debts but exclusive enough to make those thanks meaningful. In any case, I must begin by thanking my parents, Joseph and Pearl, for their love, support, and belief throughout this process. Their unsurpassed work ethic has been a model for me; and that selflessness of theirs, which has been passed on to me, has put the navel-gazing enterprise of writing a dissertation into the proper perspective. Along the same lines, I must thank my sister, Stacie, whose many wise words and impossibly funny stories (often the same) has kept me bright in spite of the dust I gathered in libraries.

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for an additional year of fellowship support, in the form of a Mellon Fellowship. This additional year of financial support allowed me to explore the body of work that became the historical basis for the dissertation. Particularly for someone writing on the culture of modern finance, these gifts have a special resonance: as traces of a time that never existed in History where a gift could be thought of as existing outside of the world of exchange.

Over the years, I have profited immensely from friends I met at the University of Iowa: Will Hacker, Sarah Mesle, Justin Quagliata, and Joe Skala. At Cornell, Niels Buch-Jepsen, Brandon Harvey, Mike Klotz, Seph Murtagh, Ramesh Mallipeddi, and Marlon Kuzmick have helped and, at times, productively hindered me. I must single out Niko Poulakos for recognition as he has singled me out for his attention, wisdom, kindness, and provocation. Chapter 2 grew directly out of a dissertation boot-camp he prepared for me at his rustic hideaway (in New Jersey).

Finally, I would like to thank Meghan Freeman for her constant support and encouragement. Her endlessly fascinating insights into philosophy and literature, her boundless enthusiasm in conversation, and her willingness to entertain and challenge my ideas helped me to focus and clarify virtually every aspect of this dissertation. It is as much her work as mine. However apropos a line of verse would be in this space, no words can express how lucky and thankful I am to have such an advocate, adviser, confidant, friend, and partner.



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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### The Historical Origins of the Modern Future

John Sitter opens his introductory essay of the recent *Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, “The Future of Eighteenth-Century Poetry”, with the following observation:

Because accounts of eighteenth-century English poetry so commonly stress either its supposed preoccupation with the past or its immersion in the topical present, it may help to begin by speaking of its future. Many of the period’s poets did write with a “neo-classical” eye on the classical past... Similarly, many seem to have considered the pressure of present political events one of poetry’s larger concerns... But perhaps more distinctive of the eighteenth-century poets that their sense of the past and appetite for news – traits which we partly share – is their tendency to look toward the future.<sup>1</sup>

Sitter goes on to point toward the wide variety of ways in which the future manifests itself in the poetry of the period, noting that some wrote *for* the future, for posterity, or, as Johnson put it in his “Prologue to *Comus*”, “nations yet unborn,” and others wrote *about* the future, about its prospects and its dangers, cautiously at times, optimistically at others. Sitter is absolutely correct in noting that the poetry of the period is preoccupied with futurity in a way that is quite different from our own, the future having fallen within literary circles primarily into “the precincts of science fiction.” One might add that this preoccupation was by no means unique to poetry of eighteenth-century England.<sup>2</sup> Countless literary forms served as forums for the explicit

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<sup>1</sup> John Sitter. “The Future of Eighteenth-Century Poetry” in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Given the ubiquity of futuristic tropes and discourses, there has to my knowledge never been a thorough study of the future or futurism in eighteenth-century literature. When the “future” does get noticed, it tends to quickly dissolve into observations concerning inventions, the incipient industrialization of England, and other “technological” matters, which suggests just how colored our lenses have become regarding the semantic connotations of “the future.” In a post-Jetsons age, the idea that the future might be the site of contentions concerning matters other than flying automobiles and holodecks is almost inconceivable. The essay that most closely touches on the future as a distinct topic within the broader narrative literature is J. Paul Hunter’s “Looking Forward: Time” in *Before Novels*:

discussion of such things as posterity, the national future, the future state, the eternal future, the afterlife, preparation, projects, speculations, predictions, prophecies, prophets, prescience, the second-sight, calculation, anticipation, expectation, prescription, planning, insuring, hedging, hazarding, risking, fearing, and hoping, to list but a small array of terms specifically related to futurity. While such a broad range of topics guaranteed that these literary forms drew upon a wide variety of discourses, traditions, and that they appealed to many different audiences, it is nevertheless true that the future, in hindsight, can be said to have been a stable and specific enough conceptual umbrella for eighteenth-century thinkers and writers to take highly positional stances with respect to each of them. At the dawn of the nineteenth century, William Hazlitt, from whose essay “On the Past and Future” the title for this dissertation has been taken, was able to look back on the previous century and write meaningfully, and indeed, moralistically, “upon the past and the future,” as categories of understanding and as highly value laden terms. Hazlitt was able to boldly and baldly state that the emphasis placed upon the future, upon the “store yet untouched,”—an emphasis for which the authors to be discussed in this dissertation were partly responsible—was highly misguided and detracted from the value of both reflection and the pleasures of the present. Even in Hazlitt’s ability to pit futurism against both the past and present it is apparent that the forward-looking orientation had come to mean something unique and particularly threatening to the broad range of human experience. In this respect, Hazlitt’s essay is primarily a negation of an increasingly futuristic social and cultural landscape, rather than an idealist defense of pastoral traditionalism or presentism.

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*The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction*. New York: Norton, 1990. This being said, Hunter’s essay focuses more on modernity, the news, novelty and curiosity, four terms which have more in common with the temporality of the present than the future.

Part of this fondness for all things future in literature of the early- to mid-eighteenth century is owing to the very situatedness of writers in a newly formed and rapidly expanding print culture. Faced with the daily threat of starvation in many cases, and understanding that the audiences towards which literary productions were aimed were, in fact, beyond understanding (though not contempt, nonetheless), it would seem natural for the diurnal writer, the occasional poet, the journalist, Spectator, novelist, hack-theologian, moralist, sermonizer, or natural philosopher to find themselves spending as much time “wand’ring in the Wilds of future Being” (Johnson) as putting pen to paper. The anxieties Defoe expressed in his essays on print piracy reveal a deep concern not only with reception, but with the future fate of what he took to be his own(ed) work, and because of that work’s correspondence with the quantity of bread on his table, his own life. In these essays, which themselves helped to secure the association between intellectual theft and “piracy,” Defoe drew heavily on the language of sea-faring, and the risky nature of oceanic voyage. Put in this context, the most prolific and successful writer of the early period unsurprisingly saw during his time a “general Projecting Humour [in] the Nation” (1702), by which he meant a tendency to act in the present based upon future expectations and grounded in the faith that those actions would translate into future success for both the individual and the nation.<sup>3</sup> Defoe’s indebtedness to the language of shipping, piracy, and risk in these essays allowed him to envision writers as being as much a part of the national economic policies and practices as those who were rigging masts and steering actual vessels. Projects referred to the wide-range of forward-looking orientations and practices in which the multitudes engaged, and writing, as a project, could be related to the more brutal risks of the sea. But while the actual sea of seventeenth- and even much eighteenth-century thought was governed by an inscrutable Providential

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Defoe. “Preface” to *An Essay upon Projects*, edited by Joyce D. Kennedy. New York: AMS Press, 1999. ii.

authority, the sea of literary pirates upon which Defoe wrote was a particularly modern one in that it could, to an extent, be managed, directed, and predicted by the savvy author and cautious printer. Even so, the urgency of literary success was very much a factor for Haywood, Fielding, and Johnson, all of whom pinned their hopes upon the fickle tastes of an indeterminate and unpredictable readership (casting their works out to a sea of readers, as it were). Haywood, as a woman writer, certainly felt this burden of the future; Fielding, always on the brink of bankruptcy, and often heavily involved in non-literary projects, did as well; as for Johnson, the uncaring, unburdened nonchalance implied by his legendarily dilatory compositional practice is belied by the deepest concerns regarding both the immediate fates of his family and friends as well as his studied and agonizing attempts to secure the future of English literature itself through his biographies, critical essays, and of course, *The Dictionary*.

Of course, the burden of the future has been felt by every writer, every human being, in all times and in all places, so simply identifying its presence within a rather arbitrarily selected batch of eighteenth-century English novelists does little to advance our understanding of them, much less our understanding of the history of the future. Certainly the emerging print market's gradual displacement of a slightly more stable, if less profitable, system of literary patronage meant that writers could and did engage with temporal uncertainties in new and original ways. At the same time, the very ubiquity of this milieu, the very impossibility of *not* feeling the burden of the future by authors, means that it also fails to help us chart differences between and amongst writers as not even the most pugnacious Tory satirists would have lauded or reveled in the penury and disappointment of their brothers and sisters in arms; if anything, it was the *success* of literary rivals that truly peaked the ire of writers such as Pope, Swift, and later, Savage (whose failures were themselves the occasion for Johnson's pity). No, it was not the struggle to master one's destiny in print that was ambivalently

rendered, and differentially addressed (though the delusiveness implied by the attempt to *actually* master one's destiny against the will of God may have been the subject of some mirth), but rather the type of subject that futurism implied. In other words, while all (or at least, many) authors were turned towards the future, few acknowledged the legitimacy of that orientation, concern for the future implying degenerate characteristics ranging from hubris to hypocrisy, interestedness to ignominy. It wasn't Colley Cibber's poems that drew out the best and worst of Pope, but rather Cibber's presumption in publishing them and the ambitious tack that he took after acquiring the laureate.

The orienting problem for this dissertation concerns just this antipathy, this overwhelmingly negative opinion of what the brief discussion of the print market above suggested was an almost universal condition of writers.<sup>4</sup> The question that began this project, and which continues to haunt my readings of eighteenth-century novels in particular, is why futurism engendered so much hostility in the world of print. More importantly, how did (and does) this hostility help to shape the form and meanings of novels in particular? Why, for instance, are characters engaged in projects of one kind or another so frequently villainized while their heroic counterparts drift instead somewhat aimlessly through the world, largely oblivious of the morrow? Further, in what ways do the prose fictions of the period help to naturalize futuristic and/or utopian patterns of thought and action in spite of this ostensible hostility towards the forward-looking subject? I use the term futurism primarily for lack of a better word and because its ambiguity allows for the provisional comparison and differentiation of more specific claims concerning the future. I use the term not as it refers to the Futurism of Marinetti or the kind of futurist Utopias we associate with

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<sup>4</sup> Neil Saccamano's seminar on eighteenth-century print culture was instrumental in helping me to clarify how problems of finance and risk might be brought to bear on the risks inherent in literary production, particularly that of Defoe.

science fiction or the followers of such visionaries as Alvin Toffler, but rather to broadly designate the notion of the individual subject's orientation towards and solicitude for the future. I have taken my title from Hazlitt because his essay suggests that eighteenth-century writing served to consolidate a diverse array of forward-looking epistemologies, practices, and moralities into the reified abstraction Hazlitt took it to be, for before the eighteenth century it would have been almost impossible to speak of the human future, or the human looking toward the future, without relying heavily upon a notion of the apocalyptic future and the Providential direction of human history, a reliance that implicitly puts the futuristic individual subject in abeyance. At times, in the course of this dissertation, I refer to futurism as a "forward-looking disposition" or "orientation," at others as a "speculative disposition;" in Chapter 2, on *Tom Jones*, I argue that Fielding's relation to futurism can be discerned in his extraordinarily complicated relationship to Prudence. The point is that while Hazlitt was capable of speaking of a general attitude towards the future in the early nineteenth century, it was in and through the differential representations of futurity and futurism in the eighteenth that Hazlitt's abstraction begins to take shape.

The purpose of this introductory essay is to provide one possible framework for understanding the widespread cultural anxiety about these orientations, namely, the framework offered by developments in the world of finance and the relation of those developments to the figure of Providence and the state of England as a nation. This chapter seeks to synthesize a wide array of historical methods, theories, and facts in the interest of producing a sense of what eighteenth-century futurism might mean to us today, not what it would have meant to the people embroiled in its development and naturalization. Consequently, this introduction is not an attempt to summarize the various takes on futurity and its related manifestations, but rather a focused and sustained engagement with a set of texts that collectively reveal broader social and



cultural patterns. Because this is a speculative history, it must necessarily omit significant related developments in certain spheres, such as those in the world of natural philosophy, while placing extra focus upon others. Many of the claims and suggestions offered in the following pages should be novel to the literary historian, if not to the economic historian. Even within that latter set, there is at this point no comprehensive attempt to historicize futuristic attitudes or orientations in the period in question, though the related work of scholars such as Johannes Fabian, Reinhart Koselleck, Lorraine Daston, and to an extent, J.G.A. Pocock, has begun to historicize the normative forces at work in the formation of temporal epistemologies before, during, and after the Enlightenment.<sup>5</sup> It is owing to the deficiency of such a study that such a substantial portion of this dissertation must be devoted to building a historical framework that will hopefully shed some light on aspects of eighteenth-century literature that have been limited by more restrictive discourses (such as that of generic convention in the case of Haywood), relegated to subordinate status (such as the time-worn question of Prudence in Fielding), or ignored almost entirely (such as Johnson's obsessive aestheticizing of future time).

Between 1690 and 1750 England experienced what P.G.M. Dickson famously called a "financial revolution."<sup>6</sup> Through a complex combination of changes in the methods of state financing, the forms of banking, and the nature of securities exchange, Britain quickly rose from a state characterized by recurrent conditions of monarchical penury and fiscal chaos to one of absolute European commercial

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<sup>5</sup> Johannes Fabian *Time and the other: how anthropology makes its object*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983; Reinhart Koselleck *Futures past: on the semantics of historical time*. Translated by Keith Tribe. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985; Lorraine Daston *Classical probability in the Enlightenment*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988; J.G.A. Pocock *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975. The countless discussions generated by these works do not, in any event, focus specifically on temporal perceptions or attitudes as historical problems.

<sup>6</sup> The starting point for any discussion of eighteenth-century finance is P.G.M. Dickson's *The financial revolution in England: a study in the development of public credit, 1688-1756*. Aldershot, Hampshire, England: Gregg Revivals, 1993. Reprinted and distributed by Ashgate Publishing Company.

superiority and financial efficiency. Alongside of these massive institutional transformations was the emergence of a new kind of individual investor, one possessed by the “projecting Humour,” as Defoe had written. This proclivity towards anticipating the economic future, or projecting,—perhaps because of its association with the sordid and banal discourse of finance—has been long overshadowed in critical discussions of eighteenth century epistemology and subjectivity by the looming and lofty socio-cultural figures which we more readily associate with Enlightenment thought: Politics, Science, and Philosophy. However, interest in the applicability of revisionist and postmodern accounts of Economic history has been reawakened within the context of what has been called by Martha Woodmansee and Mark Osteen in their 1999 volume of the same name, “the new economic criticism.”<sup>7</sup> The project at the heart of this movement—which given its institutional support and member solidarity seems to be a fair appellation even if what it denotes is constantly evolving—is the reassessment of traditional economic history through emphasis on the intersections of economic history with the once-thought discrete histories of rhetoric, narrative, representation, sexuality, and identity politics. A significant and expected feature of this reassessment has been the investigation of literary artifacts with an eye to both the ways in which economic history’s tropes and narratives have influenced the course of literary history as well as the way in which literary history has offered models and paradigms for the naturalization as well as subversion of economic modalities and assumptions. The list of literary scholars who have contributed to this body of work, either through conference organization or publication, is far too extensive to include here, so rather than stake my own claim within this large and diverse community of scholars, I will allow this work to speak for itself. It should be noted that if the new economic criticism is, in the perhaps biased opinion of the

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<sup>7</sup> *The new economic criticism: studies at the intersection of literature and economics*. Edited by Martha Woodmansee and Mark Osteen. New York: Routledge Press, 1999.

eponymous volume's editors, "one of the most promising areas of research in literary and cultural studies," (3) the study of eighteenth-century English literature has been one of most important sub-disciplines in forwarding its aims.<sup>8</sup>

The readings in this dissertation begin with the assumption, which it is the purpose of the following pages to warrant, that one of the reasons for the multiform antipathy expressed in the novels of the eighteenth century is that the pre-history of the financial revolution stressed the fact that expectation in monetary matters entailed a usurpation of divine determining authority, that individual attempts to seal future gain in the form of contracts that could be enforced through temporal justice involved the rejection of God's claim on the future financial well-being of his subjects. From this point, the readings that follow try to understand the pervasiveness of this claim, and how authors revised it, as it manifests itself allegorically in three radically different forms of narrative fiction, which I very reservedly categorize as the romance, the picaresque novel, and the philosophical fable. I am not interested in tracking the rise of the novel, or in establishing strong connections between these discrete genres; rather, I wish to explore how different narrative forms framed the problems of futurism and how each respectively attempted to find solutions. These allegorical

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<sup>8</sup> The number of books taking financial and economic questions as essential to the exposition and interpretation of eighteenth-century literature and culture is large. Some of the works which have been important to my considerations of this intersection include Sandra Sherman *Finance and Fictionality in the early eighteenth century*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1996; James Thompson *Models of Value: Eighteenth-Century Political Economy and the Novel*, Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996; Patrick Brantlinger *Fictions of State: Culture and Credit in Britain, 1694-1994*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1996; Laura Brown *Fables of Modernity: Literature and Culture in the English Eighteenth Century*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2001; Catherine Ingrassia *Authorship, Commerce, and Gender in Early Eighteenth Century England*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1998; the entire lot of essays included in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, volume 31, Edited by Ourida Mostefai and Catherine Ingrassia, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2002; Colin Nicholson *Writing and the Rise of Finance*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge UP, 1994. A related volume focusing on theater is Jean-Christophe Agnew *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge UP, 1986. A book skirting around fundamentally economic questions, but which engages with related problems in the history of moral sentiment is Blakey Vermeule's *The Party of Humanity*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000. A wonderful, but slightly older work that anticipated some of the approaches of literary scholars working under the rubric of the New Economic Criticism is Samuel L. Macey's *Money and the Novel: Mercenary Motivation in Defoe and His Immediate Successors*, Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press, 1983. Along the same lines see T.K. Meier's *Defoe and the Defense of Commerce*, ELS Monograph Series: University of Victoria Press, 1987.

readings (one on social anticipation and scheming, one on prudential ethics, one on the aesthetics of the future) often reveal their groundedness in economic problems by way of seemingly accidental representations of explicitly financial or monetary matters. In other words, although the readings of each of these pieces drift quite far from the specific domain of the financial (which involves explicit discussions of such things as exchange practice, banking, credit, lending, stock-jobbing, trading, debt, lotteries, profiteering, etc.), and involve claims about social spaces and practices that lie ostensibly outside of the realms of finance, the salience of financial logic (as well as its moral claims and the claims against it) can be witnessed in each of these texts' accidental flirtations with economic matters (e.g.—in Haywood's representation of the dangers inherent in exchange between futurists, in Tom Jones' encounter with Sophia's pocketbook, in the lesson provided by the lottery-player in *Rambler* 181, or in Imlac's mercantile personal history in *Rasselas*). At the same time, each of these moments illustrate how polymorphous and pervasive the claim against futurism had become and how what had been a charge against a specific form of financial practice (namely, usury) had interpenetrated the broader range of human experience in the wake of a financial revolution that could be morally criticized but whose triumph was absolute.

In spite of certain necessary recourses to a grammar of causation which I undertake in parts the following chapters, I do not insist upon the idea that alterations in the financial world of late-seventeenth-century England were the mechanical causes of the dissemination of anti-futurist or pro-futurist polemics and sentiments in eighteenth-century English narrative literature. Rather, the shape which the problems of futurity take in the world of finance mirror similar problems in other areas of human experience, and as such offer us a ready set of "allegorical signifieds," what Frederic Jameson describes in the *Political Unconscious* as a "persistent dimension of

literary and cultural texts precisely because they reflect a fundamental dimension of our collective thinking and our collective fantasies about history and reality.”<sup>9</sup> So might much the same be said of literature written at the dawn of the modern economic world, but to the objection that such a bold proclamation flattens the texture of experience into one self-replicating pattern of ideas and events, I would assert, with Jameson, that probing for explicit topical references to finance in the literature of the period in an effort to really understand the shape of financial and historical experience

reconfirms that structural, experiential, and conceptual gap between the public and the private, between the social and the psychological, or the political and the poetic, between history or society and the ‘individual,’ which – the tendential law of social life under capitalism – maims our existence as individual subjects and paralyzes our thinking about time and change just as surely as it alienates us from our speech itself. To imagine that, sheltered from the omnipresence of history and the implacable influence of the social, there already exists a realm of freedom...is only to strengthen the grip of Necessity over all such blind zones in which the individual subject seeks refuge, in pursuit of a purely individual, a merely psychological, project of salvation. The only effective liberation from such constraint begins with the recognition that there is nothing that is not social and historical – indeed, that everything is ‘in the last analysis’ political. (20)

Just as the private is always saturated with the forms of the public, so might it be said that the public draws upon private forms, that financial ideology owes as much to the values and forms, of say, romance narrative, as it does to the more topical essays written in opposition to stock-jobbing, if not more so in that within the latter set of “public” texts political allegiances (and therefore grounds for rejection or dismissal) would have been more readily identifiable than in the ostensibly apolitical romances of Eliza Haywood. Jameson cautions that this position should not be construed to mean that each and every form within the structure sways to the mystifying beat of more a fundamental rhythm, or that the literary text obeys the dictates of the world of real historical experience. Rather, a certain interpretive act for which I am in many respects responsible shows that the shape that futurism took during the course of the

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<sup>9</sup> Frederic Jameson *The Political Unconscious*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981.

eighteenth century modified, subverted, and emboldened a series of claims made pertaining to finance in the preceding centuries.

This study is thus one of both sameness and difference, wherein the common preoccupation with problems pertaining to futurity and individual attitudes towards it allow for a differential analysis of three prominent eighteenth-century authors. Each chapter shows how the financial inflections of the futurity problem were reworked to produce not just different “statements” about futurity, but often entirely different kinds of narratives. Formal matters are the focus of each of these chapters, and it is narrative form—inclusive of such matters as narratorial persona, syntax, setting, description, characterology, sequence, structure, and assessments of different thresholds of narratability—that counts here as evidence of textual interest and engagement with the futurism question more than any topical claims within those texts concerning finance (even Fielding’s “statements” concerning prudence in *Tom Jones*, explicit though they are, must be evaluated against the total form of his novel). When I speak of a preoccupation with futurity, I mean that futurity is a significant enough problem in a text for the very form of that text to manifest that problem; and, also, that this problem challenges the individual author’s ability to contain the unlimited potential of futuristic elements and terminology. I deviate from Jameson’s insistence in *The Political Unconscious* that the work of scholar is to recognize and delineate Utopian prospects alongside of the scholar’s deductions of mystifying and confining ideological forces at work in a given text. My reason for doing so has to do primarily with history, for the kind Utopianism which Jameson relies upon and prescribes in his analysis is itself very much the product of a “projecting Humour,” though one whose genealogy is closer to the plans and visions of nineteenth-century reformers and revolutionaries. Generally, this dissertation approaches each of these novelists with an eye to the process whereby certain forms of forward-looking behaviors and attitudes become

legitimate, but whereas I proffer the view that the necessity for doing so originated in the requirements of the new financial order, I would also willingly acknowledge that that process of legitimation served to advance nobler and worthier causes than the pockets of stockjobbers, bankers, or politicians. So, if there is a Utopian moment in this naturalization of futurism, it lies in the fact that Utopianism itself is a mode of thinking about the future. But as Jameson would also be the first to stress, his is a wholly temporal, earthly, and human Utopia, an act of phantasmatic social projection that would have been unthinkable (or at least heretical) within the terms set by Christian Providentialist theology.

*Providentialism and the Spirit of Usury*

To grasp the connections between futurism and Providentialism, particularly the way in which these two worldviews are at odds with one another, one must look to (and, unfortunately, this is the most I can do in the space available) the history of usury. The primary objections which Luther and Calvin voiced against usury (in a somewhat rare moment of agreement) had little to do with the sterility of money, or with its Jewish associations, or even with profit per se, for the cause of profit was certainly an integral reason for the success of Protestantism, and remains at the ideological center of most of its derivatives in the twentieth- and twenty-first-centuries. What truly chafed the forefathers of Protestantism was not that usury could be exploitative, cruel, heartless, and destructive, but that it made a certain type of claim on the future, a claim that simply could not be reconciled with a Providentialist view of history. In short, the criteria for the acceptability of a particular economic practice had to do ultimately with risk. For Luther, in his sermons on usury, makes use of the wide range of anti-usury arguments, but that which he stresses, to the point of

repetition and obsessiveness, is that usury excludes risk.<sup>10</sup> Unlike ventures involving actual risk of loss, usurious lending was thought to provide the “investor” with security that did not derive from God’s protection or authority. The loan, textually codified and interest-bearing, offered the individual subject a modicum of security independent of Providence. Because at some level the riskiness of other sorts of financial undertakings (planting, trading, venture capitalism, etc.) involved the willful deliverance of individual futurity into the hands of an interventionist and determining Providential authority, simple profiting *could* be folded into the Christian framework. If one happened to profit, then it was God’s will that such be the case; on the other hand, if a merchant lost his ships at sea, it was the will of God and was entirely just for being so. Indeed, the metaphor of sea-faring, which Luther and those following his teachings used constantly, serves as a trope for the riskiness of an undertaking well beyond the historical time in which sea-faring remained a significant feature of daily life. Moreover, the metaphors of piracy, which I noted earlier were a significant feature of Defoe’s arguments in defense of print licensing, further suggest the embeddedness of the risk question in the eighteenth-century conception of the project. I have gotten a bit ahead of myself here, and will now back-track through some of the more significant statements concerning usury to illustrate the problem more thoroughly.

It should first be noted that developments in the history of attitudes towards usury do not proceed logically or linearly, that traces of arguments made by Luther appear throughout the succeeding centuries, even subsequent to the British Parliament’s codification of uniform interest law in the early part of the seventeenth century. There was no resolution to the usury debate, and the fact that it was railed

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<sup>10</sup> Martin Luther “Sermon on Usury” and “Sermon on Trade and Usury” in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 45. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1955.  
<<http://www.reformation.org/luther-sermon-on-usury.html>> Both sermons were delivered in 1520.



against throughout the eighteenth century, in a land where usurious practice was widely practiced, and in a land where the Crown itself could be charged exorbitant interest rates for short-term loans, demonstrates that the rhetorical forms which this “debate” took—though it was never so localized as to be, properly speaking, a debate—were prominent and diffuse. It helps to begin by asking what usury was understood to be. The common view is that usury involves the charging of interest, often deemed “excessive,” in exchange for the “use” of a larger sum of money. Often, writers wrote of charging “use upon use,” by which they meant compounding interest, or interest charged on both the principal loan as well as the interest generated by the principal loan. To be sure, this was the most common understanding of the term, and it gave rise to the rhetorical association between usurers and vipers, pigs, “biters,” worms, “*Neshek*, or the biter,” serpents, and parasites, because it was thought that the charging of interest amounted to a kind of feeding-off of the integrated wholeness of a man’s estate, business, or family fortune.<sup>11</sup> In the eighteenth-century, the rhetoric of the biter became directed towards gamblers (referring to the downfall of the eponymous gambling anti-hero of *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, Smollett’s chapter entitled “The Biter Bit” is a case in point), who allegedly were responsible for the artful acquisition of estates belonging to erstwhile “good boys,” young and innocent country gentlemen. This sense of the biter, or the usurer as a rapacious devourer of the land, effected through trickery, cheating, stealing, and simple winning, was, however, not the only grounds for the critiques of usury. To be sure, it was the act of profiting from otherwise “good” people that sparked anger, but of equal importance, and certainly of greater theological importance, was that usury entailed expectation.

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<sup>11</sup> John Blaxton *The English Usurer: or Usury Condemned by The most learned and famous Divines of the Church of England, and Dedicated to all his Majesties Subjects, for the stay of further increase of the same*. London, Printed by John Norton, Second Impression, 1634.

An Orthodoxal divine, Doctor Willet, in John Blaxton's *The English Usurer*, had shown that it was acceptable to charge interest on a loan, provided that the interest is a vague suggestion or implication, and not a contractual obligation. In this sense, usury is seen not as the simple extraction of use-payment for money lent, but as a payment codifiable through paper agreements and enforceable by law. It was not that usury meant profiting, but that it too confidently erected a distinction between the free gift and the loan. To give a gift, the divines argued, meant to establish a bond with one's neighbor; to *lend* a gift, meant to break the bond of "Brotherhood," as Benjamin Nelson has described this relation, by way of its codification in the form of a paper contract that could be delivered into the hands of a temporal authority for enforcement. What made a gift a gift, Blaxton argued, was the possibility that it might not be returned, whereas the contractually sealed loan ensured that the principal would be repaid (pending the solvency of the debtor, of course). Blaxton was not the first to make this argument, as Luther, over a century earlier, in trying to formulate a workable distinction between Christian trade and usury, had remarked that within a Christian framework "at no time are we [to be] sure of either life or property, but may [should] await and receive everything from his hands, as a true faith does. And truly we see it every day in many of God's works, that things must work out a certain way whether we like it or not" (*Trade and Usury* 255). Christian exchange practice in Luther's writings is entirely dependent upon the extent to which God gets to play a role in the determination of the trade's outcome. Both Luther and Blaxton saw that in usurious dealings (as well as insurance agreements) the place of God was difficult if not impossible to establish, for the usurer would always be "sure of...property."

It is the relationship between God and the future of individual destinies that constitutes the substance of Luther's remaining commentary on exchange and usury. According to Luther, there are four types of Christian exchange:

1. to be robbed, and then to give more
2. to give freely, without any repayment
3. lending without the imperative to repay, but accepting repayment if it is offered
4. buying and selling for cash payment

The first three are self-explanatory, except for the relationship Luther establishes between the gift and the third type. One ought to lend expecting nothing in return, “if [the principal] comes back, take it; if it does not, [the principal becomes] a gift.” Lending should always involve the risk that it becomes a gift. Here, Luther even notes that lending expecting the principal in return makes the lender “an open and condemned usurer” (*Trade and Usury*, 257). As per risk, they that lend expecting a return “take no chances on whether they get it back or not, [and hence,] are not acting in a Christian way” (*Trade and Usury* 257). What makes all of these first three forms Christian is that they do not “presume upon the future,” and all involve “clinging to God alone.” Again, one cannot form future expectations as a condition for exchange, because those expectations stand in for the will of God. At the heart of the Protestant rejection of usury, then, in the writings of its very founder, lies a rejection of usury predicated not upon profit, but upon Providence. By extension, this view of Providence is also a view of history, insofar as the events of history and the happiness of individual subjects in history is to be measured not against other temporal possibilities, against what might be the case, against how happy one might become, but against the eternal laws of God. Luther’s entire defense of commerce, if it can be said to be a defense at all, is really just an attempt to secure the individual’s life along with that of his community, and constitutes in this respect more of a negotiation between the competing paradigms of commercial necessity and Lutheran Providentialism.

Admittedly, Luther's teachings came to England through the more commercially friendly doctrines of Calvin, but even in his teachings usury is condemned on the grounds that it involves the individual subject's displacement of Providence. Within the doctrines relating to the calling, the individual subject is figured as a passive agent responding to the call of God, a non-presuming subject whose fate in a calling is a function of that subject's obedience to a plan established by Providential forces. This is a line of argument that has been thoroughly articulated by Scott Paul Gordon in *The Power of the Passive Self in English Literature*—discussed at greater length in Chapter 2, section II below—so I will not rehearse it here. But, whereas for Gordon the rejection of the active self in eighteenth-century English literature is entirely owing to the doctrines of the calling and the concept of grace, I would stress that that emphasis in Calvin is at least at some level a further compromise between the Providential and commercial spirit, a compromise that prior to his writing was being largely contested in terms of usury. This is not to disagree with Gordon's emphasis entirely, but merely to point to the pre-existence of his claims in a financial literature, which takes on particular importance for the transition that his book attempts to account for, as financial questions become absolutely central (both chronologically and topically) to the problem area he discusses and the period his work covers. One cannot think of the transition from the intensely Providential Interregnum period—one in which Providence is as much a part of the Royalist rhetoric as it was for Cromwell's Roundheads—to the middle of the eighteenth-century without considering the way in which Providentialism is challenged by the requirements of the "new finance."<sup>12</sup>

In *The Long Sermon on Usury*, Luther also revisits the issue of free-lending. People ought to give to beggars, even if it places the temporal goods of the giver in the

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<sup>12</sup> For more on the appropriation of Providentialist rhetoric during the Interregnum, see Blair Worden "Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England" *Past and Present*, no. 109, Nov. 1985. 55-99.

hands of one who will not or cannot repay. To deny giving for this reason assumes that one does not trust in God to solve the temporal problems of individual people. Again, the function of the will of God in the ethics undergirding exchange is central: it is not enough to say that you should give for the sake of the other person, but also, by giving, you place your life and happiness into the hands of a force (God) which cannot be calculated, and can only be trusted. Benjamin Nelson conceptualizes the shift in codes of friendship, the shift from “universal brotherhood” to “universal otherhood,” as a shift from “personal relations to general sociability in which all men and all states are treated with calculated benevolence.”<sup>13</sup> It was the calculation of benevolence, not the simple fact of profit, that lead to even more extreme indictments of usury in the period following Luther. In Miles Mosse’s *Arraignment and Conviction of Usurie* (1595) he pens the following:

Not only hee who in lending covenanteth for gaine, or whose usurious practises may be discovered of men, is such an usurer as is condemned by the word of God: but even hee which lendeth without any covenant at all, and doth onely *expect* an increase, or *hope* for gaine at the hand of the borrower, he is judged of men and condemned of God as a committer of usurie. And therefore, if I lend without covenanting for gaine, but yet *hoping* that he to whom I lend wil in regard therof speake a good word for me, helpe me to a good mariage, procure me a gainfull office, or such like: this *expectation* and *amendment* maketh me to become an usurer. (385)<sup>14</sup>

One sees that the notion of accumulation in lending does not begin and end with money or materially measurable commodities. Christ’s point in the sermon on the mount, the Biblical source for the majority of arguments opposing usury—that the left hand (which taketh) should not know what the right (which giveth) is doing—can obviously be opened up to gifts and acquisitions of both material and immaterial

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<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Nelson *The Idea of Usury, from tribal brotherhood to universal otherhood*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969.

<sup>14</sup> Miles Mosse *The arraignment and conuiction of vsurie : That is, The iniquitie, and vnlawfulnes of vsurie, displayed in sixe sermons, preached at Saint Edmunds Burie in Suffolke, vpon Prouerb. 28.8. By Miles Mosse, minister of the worde, and Bachelor of Diuinitie. Seene and allowed by authoritie.* London: Printed by the widdow Orwin, for John Porter, 1595.

kinds. For Mosse, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, it was the bare and seemingly (to us) unavoidable, necessary, uncontrollable act of expecting that was subject to critique. While I would not go so far as to posit that before the eighteenth century expectation was either impossible or unethical generally, Mosse's incredibly stark relation to the problem of expectation suggests that it was conceived as evil primarily in economic terms. I cannot place too much stress on how bizarre and unbelievable an attitude such as Mosse's seems to me. Less than a century after his expostulation, England had developed a financial order hinging entirely on expectation, anticipation, planning, foresight, long-term borrowing (entailing equivalently long-term imaginative bankers), saving, etc. Perhaps it was the very starkness of his view that rendered a strict anti-expectation argument untenable, and through which, in virtue of this untenability, more moderate forms of lending and expecting became possible. While the period between Mosse's writing and the establishment of a law setting limits on interest charges at the dawn of the seventeenth century and the Restoration is of considerable interest to the economic historian and must be considered when using a phrase such as "financial revolution" (as it refers to the 1690s and the immediately subsequent decades), I wish to skip forward to the decades immediately preceding the watershed events of the 1690s (particularly the establishment of the national debt and the two institutions developed to manage that debt, namely, the Bank of England and the Million Lottery). While the blanket condemnation of expectation had largely receded from view in the light of new financial necessities brought about by the increasing importance of money to the waging of foreign wars and domestic military securitization, it persisted in altered forms, as critiques of manipulative behavior within the market.

*Providence and the Double-Dealing King*

Prior to the founding of a national bank which would be in charge of managing state debt, the Crown had frequently borrowed from private individuals, primarily in the form of short-term high-interest bearing loans which it intended to repay in full as soon as possible, but would occasionally simply refuse to do, thus leading to damaged credit of both the current monarchy as well as its immediate successors.<sup>15</sup> The state of Crown finance was so deplorable that when Civil War erupted in 1640, Charles I felt compelled to seize the entire sum of money contained in the Royal Mint, located in the Tower of London at the time. The outcry was substantial, and the king—in a rather portentous moment of capitulation—returned the treasure upon the condition of his keeping 40,000 l. as a loan.<sup>16</sup> While rudimentary forms of nearly all of the major financial innovations appeared at various points throughout the seventeenth century—banks, organized creditors, securities, insurance firms—it wasn't until the Restoration and the formation of a “National Debt” that these forms became institutions and the financial revolution can be said to have begun.

This rather scandalous asset seizure was succeeded some thirty years later when Charles II made an order to the Exchequer to cease payments on all outstanding loans made to the Crown. The motivations for doing so were quite different from those of the former Charles, as this time the king had ample funds to continue debt repayment (Roseveare 21). However, at that time Charles II was conspiring with Henry XIV of France to jointly wage war against the Dutch and in order to bring the alliance to fruition, Charles II knew that he would need to provide a greater sum of money in the coming months and years. The order to Stop the Exchequer from issuing

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<sup>15</sup> Henry Roseveare *The Financial Revolution, 1660-1760*. New York: Longman, 1991. 8.

<sup>16</sup> John Giuseppe *The Bank of England, a history from its foundation in 1694* Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1966. 7.

payments on loans made to the Crown was issued December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1671,<sup>17</sup> quickly devastating some of the major creditors involved. However, historians have found its ultimate consequences rather difficult to assess.<sup>18</sup> In point of fact, the group of individuals to whom the Crown owed was a small, close knit group of London financiers, primarily the Lombard Street gold-smith bankers, a group who had up to this point and in addition to the Royal Mint, provided the primary option for safe deposit. Of the approximately 1,300,000 l. frozen by royal decree, approximately 80 percent was owed to four individuals, 32 percent to Sir Robert Vyner alone. Nevertheless, W.R. Scott has pointed out that in spite of the limited number of direct lenders to the crown, “it is to be remembered that most of the funds, lent by them to the Crown, had been borrowed from their depositors,” and when these primary lenders failed “the area of ruin extended to the merchants, until it reached many widows and orphans, whose income was derived from the interest on their capital.”<sup>19</sup> As Scott’s rhetoric suggests, the Crown’s credit with lenders had a great deal more to do with the public spin put on “the Stop” and the adversely affected “widows and orphans” than with the actual number of individuals affected, for as P.G.M. Dickson put it, after it

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<sup>17</sup> Carruthers suggests that the order to stop payment was issued on January 2, 1672, but Roseveare is right in saying that the order was first formally given in December of 1671. Bruce Carruthers *City of Capital: Politics and Markets in the English Financial Revolution*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996. 62

<sup>18</sup> Whether credit suffered as a result of “the Stop” is less a question than to what extent it actually affected large quantities of individuals. More recent scholarship has shown that the number of individuals affected was much smaller than has been assumed. In any case, the historical truth of the matter is of little importance when considering matters of credit, which is entirely fictive and rumor-oriented. For further reading on the history of this event see Henry Roseveare’s unpublished Cambridge University dissertation *The Advancement of the King’s Credit, 1660-1672* (1962); Roseveare *The Financial Revolution in England, 1660-1760* (op. cit. 15). PP. 21-26; W.R. Scott *The constitution and finance of English, Scottish and Irish joint-stock companies to 1720*, vol. 1 of 3, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1910-1912. PP. 287-291; Dickson *Financial Revolution* (op. cit. 6). PP. 43-45.

<sup>19</sup> See also Sir John Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire* (orig. 1785), New York: A.M. Kelly, 1966. P. 315; William John Lawson *The History of Banking*, London: R. Bentley, 1850. PP. 197-200.



“there was always a question-mark against Charles’ financial reputation.” (Scott 287)<sup>20</sup>

The eventual settlement reached by the king and his lenders was sufficient to insure that Charles would remain solvent, although thanks to the complicated repayment strategy designed to allay this lack of confidence he had “created the first portion of what was to become a permanent ‘National Debt.’”<sup>21</sup> The National Debt of the late seventeenth century is in many ways similar to that of the United States today. In essence, the King agreed to borrow a large sum of money from the Treasury with the proviso that the state would repay this sum, plus a specified rate of interest, over an extended period of time. As mentioned earlier, the Crown had frequently borrowed money, but only in the form of short-term loans which meant that the government could hardly spend the money borrowed before it had to begin considering ways of repaying the principal as delay would mean that greater amounts of national revenue (mostly in the forms of taxes and duties) would have to go towards paying simply the interest, which though limited by the anti-usury laws of the seventeenth century to a maximum of 10% p.a., was still a considerable amount if the loan was at all substantial. By shifting towards long-term, low-interest loans, the state could use the funds allocated to it by private creditors to immediately improve the state of the nation (militarily, socially, commercially, or otherwise) without the need to impose dramatic increases in taxes or duties on the citizenry. Instead, the Crown could simply maintain its current level of taxation and pay down the debt as circumstances would allow. In reality, as all of the interested parties to the agreement knew, the likelihood of the principal ever being repaid was rather small. The idea of perpetual debt to the citizenry

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<sup>20</sup> Dickson *Financial Revolution*. P. 250.

<sup>21</sup> According to Roseveare, “By [1677], a series of prosperous years following England’s disengagement from the Franco-Dutch war of 1672-78 had enabled Charles to fund an annuity of 140,000 [pounds] p.a. on the bankers’ debt. this they were required to re-allocate to their depositors in the form of 6% annuities, drawn up and witnessed in the Exchequer, authorised under the Great Seal and registered on the securest portion of the royal revenues – the hereditary Excise.”

(or at least, some citizens) fundamentally altered the perceived relation between the King and the State, for the King's debts could no longer be conceived as localized acts of trust, but as an eternal bond, dependent upon the future strength of England as a nation (which would prevent the bonds from being cancelled or nullified), and hinging upon the view that the financiers to the Crown were, in at least one sense, more integral to the maintenance of the state than any particular King. The concept of a perpetual debt was a frequent subject of attacks by Tories in particular, Squire Western's pledge/threat to contribute his insolent daughter's dowry to "the Zinking fund," or a fund intended to reduce the principal debt, being only the most famous fictionalized instance of the link between a certain Tory/Country ideology and the rejection of perpetual debt. Under these conditions, a marginal amount of interest was not detrimental to the functioning of the state nor did it present a long-term burden on national finances for the interest payments were usually calculated to accord with the probable future income of the state.

Charles II's stop of the Exchequer was an important preliminary step, albeit a momentarily disastrous one, on the path to the modern financial phenomenon known as the National Debt. Thanks to several years of prosperity in England subsequent to the stop, which resulted in a net increase in the revenues of the Crown, as well as vigorous attempts by the gold-smith bankers to reclaim what was owed to them, the king was able to regain some of the credibility which he had lost by funding an annuity of 140,000 pounds to the creditors whom he had earlier denied. Each of the bankers was allowed to allocate 6% annuities to each of their individual depositors—i.e., the creditors of the gold-smiths themselves—whose claims for withdrawal of funds they had been forced to deny as a result of the stop in the form of transferable documents composed and witnessed by the Exchequer. These documents, referred to as Bankers Assignments, were stamped with the Great Seal and authorised to be paid

out to those creditors with the monies collected from the hereditary Excise tax, which was “the securest portion of the royal revenues” (Carruthers 64; Roseveare 22).<sup>22</sup> This would have had the effect of producing in both the bankers and the depositors a faith in the Crown’s promises to repay. Charles II’s attempts to assist both groups in the form of requests to policy-makers for additional funds were noble and wise, but as they were largely ignored by Parliamentarians who had little sympathy for the relatively wealthy goldsmith-bankers, these attempts procured him little credit in the eyes of the people who had been affected by the stop as well as those who witnessed its consequences throughout London and Middlesex (where the majority of creditors resided). The Parliamentary refusals to aide these creditors was partially resulting from the fact that they saw in them the possibility of reduced royal dependence upon the Parliament: as long as Charles had private creditors, he could subvert the Parliament’s attempts to control the purse strings.

The stop of the exchequer in 1672 by Charles II was the product of a culture where the life and fortune of the nation and its people could be interrupted by the arbitrary decisions of the monarchy. In this way, social and economic processes to a large extent depended upon a causal force best understood as a sort of earthly Providence, which, being neither knowable nor determinable constituted the inevitable aleatory condition of everyday life. Thomas Kavanagh has argued that along with the growth and development of probability theory, eighteenth century mathematicians and scientists “produced” new discourses of chance or randomness.<sup>23</sup> While this may be true, chance can be said to have masqueraded as Providential determination

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<sup>22</sup> The “royal revenues” which Roseveare alludes to were comprised primarily of what Michael Braddick, following the work of Joseph Schumpeter calls “demesne revenues,” or those monies which the crown accrued as a direct or indirect result of inheritance. These would include land rents coming from tenants upon royal lands as well as “all revenues arising from a personal right belonging to the monarch” ranging from wardship fees to forest fines. Michael Braddick *The nerves of state: taxation and the financing of the English state, 1558-1714*, New York: Manchester University Press, 1996. PP. 12-14.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas M. Kavanagh *Enlightenment and the Shadows of Chance*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

throughout much of the seventeenth century, as the inscrutable and transcendent dynamic principle of an opaque natural world. In the context of the stop of the exchequer, chance, randomness, Fortune, and Providence all figurally converge in the capricious decisions of a restored monarch whose essential trait was his unpredictability. The unpredictability of the king can be read as an emblem of the seventeenth century's relationship to futurity in general. As long as the king retained exclusive control of the nation's financial condition, individual investors had to depend upon the intangible hope that the future would bring them returns on loans granted to the state. In turn, the larger group of less wealthy individuals who placed their savings into the hands of the king's creditors had equal reason to hope for the king's fidelity to his promises. The stop was perhaps the last time that financial decisions of English men and women rested entirely upon the credit of an ultimately unknowable financial determinant. Along with the rejection of exclusive monarchical authority over the financial well-being of the nation, went the rejection, at a certain level, of the Providentialist grounds for the rejection of financial expectation. When Charles damaged the credit of the monarchy he was accidentally contributing to a heightened awareness of the need for a more democratically representative means of deposit and credit. At the same time, the Parliamentary anxiety towards a strictly privatized financial sector capable of lending to the Crown was to insure that this safer means would not be lodged in the hands of a private interest (Carruthers 69). The momentous founding of the Bank of England subsequent to the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89 was to rectify both of these problems.

#### *The Bank of England and the New Finance*

It is something of a commonplace amongst economic historians to consider the arrival of the Dutch William as the arrival of Dutch finance. This is true to the extent that the Dutch had already succeeded in formulating strategies for dealing with safe

deposit, money lending and national credit, which was precisely what England was lacking at the time of William and Mary's ascent to the throne. Prior to the Bank of England's establishment in 1694, the Crown had been able to borrow from a variety of sources, but without clear protocols for doing so. Edward III had borrowed from Italian bankers such as the Fuggers, Henry VIII went to Antwerp for fiscal assistance and as we have seen, the seventeenth-century lending institutions were comprised largely of domestic sources, particularly the goldsmith-bankers of Lombard Street who were the recipients of deposits for many citizens of London and its surrounding communities. When Charles II disrupted the payments of his debts to these bankers in 1672, the entire British economy felt the reverberations for years to come.

In the face of the economic turmoil subsequent to the stop of the Exchequer, the center of state revenue collection and disbursement, the crown experienced an economic boom. The three major taxes imposed on the populous in the late-seventeenth century—the excise tax, the customs duties, and the hearth tax—produced greater and greater sums of money for James II than it had for Charles II in his last years due to a surge in trade and commerce.<sup>24</sup> Under the reign of William III the state was to reap even greater monetary rewards from a type of revenue generation device referred to as “Aids” rather than as taxes. The aids established in 1689<sup>25</sup> were essentially land taxes levied according to both the resources and physical land possessed by the property owner or renter as well as on the improvements the tenant made upon the land (Roy 16-18). I say the state reaped these rewards rather than the

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<sup>24</sup> The excise tax was primarily levied on domestically produced luxury items such as alcohol. The customs taxes were imposed on foreign imports. The extremely unpopular hearth or chimney tax was a graduated tax imposed on property owners according to the number of hearths in the house. It was abolished in 1688 by Act of Parliament as it constituted a “badge of slavery” for landowners. The land tax was imposed in its stead. For an engaging and brilliant account of the relation between taxation and English politics, see John Brewer *Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989. On this point in particular, see P. 92.

<sup>25</sup> “Aids” had been imposed by Parliamentary acts in 1665 and 1685, although their importance for financing of the national debt was not fully realized until William's reign. See Douglas Roy *Taxation in Britain Since 1660*, Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1999. P. 18.

Crown because when William and Mary took the throne Parliament saw to it that they would not be able to attempt the establishment of financial independence as James II had thought possible on the basis of the large amount of royal revenues.<sup>26</sup> These aids gradually became known in the 1690s as the Land Tax, which, combined with revenues brought in by the excise and customs taxes, amounted to roughly 90% of the state's income in the hundred years following the ascension of William and Mary (Brewer 95).<sup>27</sup> The massive increases in revenue under James and then William and Mary after the aids of 1689 were sufficient to guarantee that the crown would not be put in the kind of fiscal chaos reminiscent of the 1670s, but it was by no means sufficient to England's full scale engagement in the Nine Years War which began almost immediately after the Glorious Revolution.

An extensive amount of research in recent years has demonstrated the importance of the state's military expenditures to England's financial developments in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While there was no outstanding government debt when William and Mary took the throne in 1689, by the end of the Nine Years War the state owed nearly 17 million pounds to various creditors whose money had assisted in the transportation, equipage, and sustenance as well as the outright payment of an army and navy made up of 116, 666 men. This debt was more than twice as high by the end of War of Spanish Succession in 1713, totaling 36.2 million pounds. In a vacuum, these figures have little meaning, but when one

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<sup>26</sup> Braddick (op. cit. 22) remarks that the development of a system of public debt in which Parliamentary taxation would play a larger role insured that the monarchy was to lose a great deal of its fiscal autonomy. He writes that the improved "machinery of credit" in the mid-seventeenth century "were of great importance to government finance and the developments of the mid-century of long-term significance. An important feature of these developments was the loss of the monarch's personal influence over these borrowings" (41).

<sup>27</sup> The remarkable increase in government revenues in the 1680s and 1690s has been a frequent subject of inquiry for economic historians. Drawing on P.K. O'Brien and P.A. Hunt's crucial study of taxation in England, "The rise of a fiscal state in England, 1485-1815," [*Historical Research* 66, 1993. PP. 129-76], Braddick remarks that "the proportion of revenue derived from taxation climbed again, reaching 80 per cent by the 1630s and mounting steadily to over 90 per cent by the 1680s and 1690s...In this respect the significance of taxation lies in its contribution to increases to total revenue" (9).

considers the fact that the average annual tax revenue for the period 1689-1697 was 3.6 million pounds, and that the average annual military expenditure for the same period was roughly 5.5 million pounds, it is easy to see the extent to which England's martial agenda dominated state financing decisions.<sup>28</sup> In any event, it is important to remember that the sources of state revenue throughout this period were the people of England, either as taxpayers or as creditors to the state. While the tax and tax collection procedures of the 1690s insured that the crown would have a large and steady source of income, those funds were simply inadequate to the demands of war.<sup>29</sup>

The government at this point needed a way of generating a massive amount of revenue that it did not have to pay back immediately. Short-term loans from goldsmith bankers and private financiers meant exactly that, so alternative solutions to the financing problem were sought. When the Parliament agreed to hear proposals for the accommodation of this need in 1692, several suggestions were put forth.<sup>30</sup> The successful proposal put forth by William Paterson was refined by Charles Montagu, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, and put into place by an Act of Parliament in April 1694. The proposal was as follows: individual investors would monetarily contribute to the collection of 1.2 million pounds and in return they would be guaranteed to receive 8% *per annum* on whatever their initial contribution was. In effect, this meant that if an individual provided an immediate sum of 100 pounds, the first year following the investment they could expect to receive 8 pounds from the Bank. The subscription was completely filled within two weeks, from June 21 to July 1. On July

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<sup>28</sup> To get a sense of the size of the loans that the government was taking out to meet expenses, it is worth considering the fact that from 1574 to 1603 the English state borrowed a meager 461,000 pounds total (Braddick 20).

<sup>29</sup> Braddick *Nerves of State* (esp. chapter 27-34). Much of Braddick's research comes from Brewer *Sinews of Power*.

<sup>30</sup> There were a series of projects proposed between January 12, 1692 and the eventual founding of the Bank of England in 1694. For further consideration of these schemes, see J.K. Horsefield *British Monetary Experiments, 1650-1710*. London: London School of Economics, G. Bell and Son, 1960.

27 1694, the Parliament chartered the Bank of England and it has been in operation ever since.

Before addressing some of the issues surrounding the founding of the bank, it is important to assess the nature of the relationship that the Bank, or any lending institution for that matter, must have with its debtors. Braddick notes in his study of English taxation that there are three aspects to debt financing that affect all loans: security, returns or interest, and liquidity. In the first place, before providing any loans, a creditor must feel secure that the debtor will be able to pay back the loan at some point in the future. This security can be tangible, such as a title to lands or physical property; or it may be intangible, such as trust or a sense that an individual is industrious and will no doubt do well enough to repay later (one recalls Ben Franklin's dictum that a creditor rests easier hearing his debtor banging his hammer before the sun rises). Secondly, the person providing the loan may demand that the debtor pay interest on the loan over a given period of time. The logic behind this is that money now is better than money later. Consequently, if a prospective borrower wishes to have a large sum now, the lender is unable to invest that money and thus demands a certain amount of compensation over a prolonged future term. Interest, or return, is equivalent to rent in that a person is being charged a specified amount simply for "using" a sum of money, hence the term "usury."<sup>31</sup> Lastly, the creditor or lender may wish to have a higher degree of liquidity to their loan so that if he or she desires to receive full re-payment of the loan, he or she may transfer the debt to someone else. A lender desires liquidity so that if a unique circumstance arises—say, a sure investment opportunity—he or she will be able to find and employ a third party willing to take over the management of the debt.

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<sup>31</sup> In the Lutheran and Calvinist anti-usury polemics of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the terms "usury" and "rents," are strictly speaking different, but are understood to be ethical equivalents.



The Bank of England satisfied nearly all of these requirements. In the first place, the Bank was a function of Parliamentary activity, and was thus a reflex of the public, not the whimsical scheme of a potentially impecunious monarch. The Bank's security relied on the credit of the nation, not William or Mary. Given hindsight, James Harrington's remark in 1658 that "where there is a Bank ten to one there is a Commonwealth" was oddly portentous.<sup>32</sup> Hence, and I will return to this point momentarily, the stability of the Bank was roughly equivalent to the stability of the nation, wealth having become "common." Secondly, the rate of interest provided by the Bank for investment was deemed by its creditors to be more than satisfactory. As the subscription rates plainly show, individual investors were anxious to reap the long-term rewards that their newly purchased annuities would certainly (and *securely*) provide. Lastly, the annuities were liquid, allowing for the transfer of funds and debts in symbolical form. The Bank became not just a repository or a treasure chest, as the Tower of London had been, but in effect became a means or pathway by which the commerce of the nation could be efficiently conducted.

After the government failed to implement an earlier credit system to raise a substantial sum from the public, one involving fiduciary orders, or "credit note[s] secured against the credit of the exchequer as a whole, not against a particular source of revenue," it succeeded in a new type of policy: the formation and chartering of a central bank for the management of national debt.<sup>33</sup> Investors could place their money in the hands of the exchequer in exchange for annuities, or "credit agreements offering an annual payment," effectively providing the government with long-term, low-interest loans. "This converted the short-term debt into a long-term one, and the

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<sup>32</sup> James Harrington "The Prerogative of Popular Government" (orig. 1737) in Works of James Harrington, ed. J. Toland. P. 247. Quoted in Dickson *Financial Revolution*. P. 56.

<sup>33</sup> These notes were issued, but unfortunately for the government, in too great a number. Once investors realized that the state would not be able to repay these orders there was a run on the exchequer for repayment. Unable to meet the demand for immediate repayment, the exchequer was obliged to temporarily suspend payments. Many of these orders were transferred to other investors for substantial discounts. Braddick 41.

confidence of the investor depended on their confidence that the government would make these payments over a long period. These annuities were a success, and there was a lively market in them. This reflects, again the way in which the security of government borrowing had improved. Again, an important part of this increased confidence derived from the taxing capacity of the government” (Braddick 42). What cannot be underestimated in this account of the success of the credit of the nation, rather than just the monarch, was the absolutely central position of mass perceptions regarding the future strength of the nation. Gone were the private, isolated and immediate debts to a solitary monarch, in the place of which was now a risk widely distributed amongst the citizenry.<sup>34</sup> Once debt became not just a function of the parliament and bureaucratic institutions such as the Bank, which helped to sustain parliamentary prerogative, the entire nation became involved in each individual’s financial health. While Braddick’s focus is on the micro-history of English tax policy, he taps into a much larger cultural issue when he writes that these forms of long-term debt “required a very considerable degree of confidence in the durability and fiscal probity of the regime” (42). Government credit became entirely dependent upon the public’s awareness that it would remain stable in the time to come and that it would continue to reap “predictable and lucrative taxes” (Braddick 41).

Braddick situates the Bank of England at the end point of these developments, as the culmination of the public’s need for a stable center to government borrowing. For him, the Bank was merely an inessential aspect of the more profound developments in the system of public taxation: “There were also developments in the machinery of credit, notably in the creation of the Bank of England in 1694. This was part of an attempt by the government to raise a long-term loan of 1.2 million pounds.”

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<sup>34</sup> I do not have space to discuss the relationship between nascent theories of social contractactual obligation and the formation of this debt, although such a comparison would add a great deal to this argument.

Braddick's sense of the importance of the Bank's role in consolidating in visible and institutional form many discrete developments in British finance is correct, but his assessment of what followed it is completely distorted to serve his argument regarding taxation. He follows his brief discussion of the Bank with a comment that this "innovation was not wholly successful" as the annuities promised to investors by the government were a long-term debt burden, which it attempted to solve by "lur[ing] investors to exchange their government debts for stock in the newly created South Sea Company which was granted trading privileges in return for lending money to the government" (43). In point of fact, the Bank met with almost no opposition for several years, becoming a stable foundation for the elaboration of the entire British monetary and fiscal system. Its successful establishment was the first of many systematic attempts by the state to raise a large sum from the whole of the public, rather than from a small group of wealthy individuals, and as such, must be seen as having had great symbolic effect on the relationship between the physical public and the national economy. Moreover, the South Sea scheme wasn't raised as a possibility until late in 1719—the consequence of much debate about the prospect of a perpetual debt which raged in the House of Commons and in the periodicals—and the policy wasn't sanctioned by Parliament until February 1720 thanks to enormous amounts of bribery on the part of the Company's directors! If there was resistance to the Bank in the years immediately following its establishment, it was focused either upon the prospect of perpetual debt (which in any event turned out to be the case) or on the particular structure that the Bank had taken (many, including Defoe, proposed a Bank whose security was land, rather than money). The South Sea conversion scheme eventually came about to restructure the debt, but it had no effect (and was not designed to have an effect) on the institution that mediated the relation between the state and the citizenry, namely, the Bank.

This is a crucial point of difference, not just contentious quibbling about dates. The Bank of England, as I have noted earlier, was a widely perceived, generally-liked concretization of the financial developments of the seventeenth century. Not only did it give a kind of face to the erstwhile ambiguous entity increasingly known to be the national debt, but it also provided a commercial and monetary bedrock upon which the systems of private credit and stock exchange could safely flourish. It was owing to this institution that paper currency circulated as it never before had done, which was the essential stumbling point for those committed to the development of a reliable stock exchange (and the primary reason for the rejection of the various land bank proposals). As long as the Bank was in place, the future security of the profoundly liquid entity known as paper currency was more or less guaranteed. This security then allowed individuals to engage in speculative finance with a speed and efficiency never before known in an England where the only ways to procure substantial sums on short-notice were to sell assets (a timely and often unsuccessful process) or to take out high interest loans on short notice (which often meant that default would devastate the investor). Indeed, it was the security provided by the Bank of England that allowed such entities as the South Sea Company to emerge in the first place, as they depended precisely upon the asset liquidity that paper currency implied. So rather than being an inconsequential hiccup in the process of financial stabilization effected by the system of taxation, as Braddick suggests, the Bank was the condition of possibility of the later true interruptions such as the South Sea Bubble. Most importantly, the Bank acted to symbolically unify the individual projector, speculator, or financial futurist with the future of England itself. It meant that new financial opportunities were stable and grounded in the “great Hall where the Bank is kept” (*Spectator* 3; March 3, 1711), but because the Bank, like Credit, is unstable without faith in it (a paradoxical but accurate paraphrasing of the logic of the new finance) it created also a new set of

responsibilities. The economic freedom suggested by the Bank was also, in this respect, a burden and a duty for the responsible and patriotic Englishman.

*The Bank of England as Moral Laundromat*

A complex value-producing circuit, in which the Bank played an absolutely pivotal role, allowed all of the opprobrious and impious elements of forward-looking, self-interested behavior to be “morally laundered” by way of imagining the role of the individual in the nation as a whole. Such a statement sounds merely like a paraphrase of the “private Vices, public Benefits” thesis until it is recalled that Mandeville emphasized the *inadvertent* way in which vice became a public benefit, that it was in the disjunction between local acts of consumption (which he acknowledged to be vices) and larger public benefits that economic and social well-being might be guaranteed; that, in other words, vicious self-interest could continue unabated because its net effect was nevertheless good. In this respect, Mandeville was simply carrying the anti-futurist argument—which had always been intended to reform or check individual vice—into a new territory, in which the goal of the argument was legitimating (or at least excusing) vice itself. What I am trying to stress, however, is that the acts of forward-looking investment that had been thought of as “vicious” as lately as the 1680s and 1690s, and were a persistent feature of even the most die-hard proponents of the new finance at times, could, in virtue of the moral laundering system made possible by the Bank, be refigured by the individual investor to seem legitimate, moral, and even natural. This position has been most forcefully and persuasively historicized by J.G.A. Pocock, whose focus has been primarily upon the mobility of property in the period. Two points should be added to his argument, however. First, it was the mobility of property that allowed for the conversion of an earlier form of civic virtue into the more modern one it took subsequent to the financial revolution. But it was also the symbolic role that a national bank provided: it was a lasting,

physical reminder of the debts owed by the government to the people, and it operated as significant and signifiatory guarantee that paper currency and other financial instruments had something “under them.” It is this symbolic history that is responsible for the obnoxiously large, overwrought, epic, and firm architectural characters of both central and national banks erected since the eighteenth century. The second point worth noting is that investment was a highly public affair in the early eighteenth century. Developments in the polemical literature aside, individuals interested in investing in the stocks, the lotteries, insurance agreements, projects, and the Bank itself almost invariably had to expose (or wanted to expose) their participation in this burgeoning economic era. What follows is an account of the public nature of private business in the era of the new finance.

In addition to being the fabled heart of the emerging “public sphere,” London’s coffee-houses were the center of British commercial activity well into the eighteenth century. While the Bank provided the symbolic edifice for the financial revolution, the coffee-house was the material structure within which the revolution realized itself. Jonathan’s coffee-house was the most consistently identified with financial activity since its founding in 1680 by Jonathan Miles (Dickson 490). At Jonathan’s one could procure John Castaing’s *The Course of the Exchange*, a single sheet of paper bearing foreign exchange rates, lottery ticket prices, statistics regarding coinage, the state of government debt, and the stock quotes for the three chartered companies, the Hudson Bay Company, the East India Company and the African Company.<sup>35</sup> Once read, this information could be put to use immediately by arranging an exchange with any of a number of stock and securities traders who had offices there as well. By the end of 1695, there were approximately 150 joint-stock companies, whose shares were traded

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<sup>35</sup>John Casting *Course of the Exchange*, January 11, 1698. Reprinted in Larry Neal *The Rise of Financial Capitalism: International Capital Markets in the Age of Reason*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

primarily at Jonathan's and Garraway's coffee-house, both of which lay in Exchange Alley.<sup>36</sup> According to one possibly hyperbolic account, nearly all exchanges of stocks took place at coffee-houses:

It is grown, by the ill-influence of I know not what hydroptick stars, almost a general custom amongst us that no bargain can be drove, or business concluded between man and man, but it must be transacted at some public house...where continual sippings...would be apt to fly up into their brains and render them drowsy and indisposed...whereas, having now the opportunity of a coffee-house, they repair thither, take each man a dish or two (so far from causing, that it cures any dizziness or disturbant fumes), and so, despatching their business, go out more sprightly about their affairs than before.<sup>37</sup>

What is of greatest importance for this study is the fact that the site of exchange is public. Whereas the modern financial era is characterized by the relative privacy of individual financial affairs, in the early-eighteenth century such matters were handled in full view of others. Owing to obvious evidentiary problems, the psychological and sociological consequences of such an aura of "financiality" cannot adequately be assessed, but we may conclude that something about existing in a community of like-minded individuals had an appeal that the more traditional practices of profit seeking simply did not possess. Critics and historians have often drawn the crucial connection of the boom in stock trading in the late seventeenth century to the general "disposition to risk money" (Scott 384), to "contemporary addiction to gambling and wagers" (Dickson 492), to "a wave of speculative excitement fed by the liberation of risk capital" (Roseveare 43), and to "the nation's gambling propensity" (Chancellor 40),<sup>38</sup> but what stands out is the way that contemporary accounts of this "propensity" always involve representation of its public manifestation. John Houghton's remarks on stock trading are emblematic:

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Neal, P. 46.

<sup>37</sup> The quotation comes from Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's discussion of coffee-house culture in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986. P. 98. The text comes from an anonymous undated early-eighteenth-century treatise entitled *Coffee-Houses Vindicated*.

<sup>38</sup> Edward Chancellor. *Devil Take the Hindmost: A History of Financial Speculation*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux, 1999. P. 40.

The manner of the Trade is this: the Monied Man goes among the *Brokers* (which are chiefly upon the *Exchange*, and at *Jonathan's* Coffee-House, sometimes at *Garraway's*, and at some other Coffee Houses) and asks how *Stocks* go? and upon Information, bids the Broker buy or sell so many shares of such and such Stocks if he can, at such and such Prices: then he tries what he can do among those that have Stocks, or the power to sell them, and if he can makes a Bargain.<sup>39</sup>

The parenthetical insertion of the importance of the public-ness of private exchange reveals a crucial dimension of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century financial practice. It is not simply a passion for gambling and speculation that is the cause of so much financial activity in the period, but the profoundly public nature of those transactions. In point of fact, it would have been nearly impossible to participate in the market in such a way that it could not be known to others that one was engaging in it.<sup>40</sup> The emergence of a set of instructions or guide to “the manner of the Trade” signals its novelty. That the reader is told to go to such a social institution as the coffee-house has profound significance if we are interested in attaining a complete understanding of the culture of finance in the period. Before the emergence of such ostentatiously pecuniary social spaces, however, the coffee-house was widely known and debated. In 1674, a less than celebratory anonymous pamphlet entitled *The Women's Petition Against Coffee* called attention to both the crowd and the propensity towards the sharing of information between men:

Men...by frequenting these *Stygian Tap-houses* will usurp on our Prerogative of *Tatling*, and soon learn to excel us in *Talkativeness*: a Quality wherein our Sex has ever Claimed preheminance. For here like so many *Frogs* in a *puddle*, they sup muddy water, and murmur insignificant notes till half a dozen of them *out-babble* an equal number of us at *Gossiping*, talking all at once in

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<sup>39</sup> Houghton, John. *A Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade*, no. 101, June 1694. Quoted in Chancellor. P. 40.

<sup>40</sup> A fascinating example of the public dissemination of investments is *The Compleat Bachelors Guide* (1731), a text published for eligible bachelors of London who wished to know the financial situation of various eligible single women, from young dowagers to widows. The text is not unlike a phone-book, listing the names and addresses of all such eligible women, with the added information of each woman's investment in the Bank of England, the East India Company, and the South Sea Company.



Confusion, and running from point to point as insensibly, and as swiftly<sup>41</sup>, as ever the Ingenious *Pole-wheel* could run divisions on the Base-viol...

Through jests such as this one as well as in other seventeenth-century coffee-house literature it is possible for us to see the historical context of early securities exchanges. While there is little evidence to suggest that individual exchanges would have been made public at any point during the financial revolution, an unmistakable aroma of commerce mingled with tobacco smoke and gossip would have been present at Jonathan's, Garraway's, and Sam's. There are scores of extant advertisements for potential investors in a countless variety of projects, expeditions, inventions and corporations. When a major lottery was being held, it was common for groups of individuals to band together to purchase a greater number of entries than any single investor could afford, and often, the requests for potentially interested investors were published in magazines and newspapers. The negative attitudes toward coffee-house culture registered in the excerpt from *The Women's Petition* above was gone by the dawn of the eighteenth-century, and it is likely that its intimate connection to financial practice—perhaps increasingly understood as a kind of labor—was at least part of the reason for the diminution of this criticism.

In a letter from Alexander Pope to his stockbroker we get an added dimension to this climate:

I daily hear such reports of advantages to be gained by one project or other in the Stocks, that my Spirit is Up with double Zeal, in the desire to enrich ourselves...I hear the S. Sea fell since, & should be glad we were in: I also hear there is considerably to be got by Subscribing to the new African Stock, Pray let us do something or other, which you judge the fairest Prospect, I am

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<sup>41</sup> *The Womens Petition Against Coffee Representing to Publick consideration the Grand Inconveniencies accruing to their SEX from the Excessive Use of that Drying, Enfeebling Liquor. Presented to the Right Honorable the Keepers of the Liberty of Venus. By a Well-willer—London, Printed 1674. Reprinted in Old English Coffee Houses Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press, 1954. As I have not seen the original print, it is difficult to determine whether this reprint is faithful to the original text. The logic of punctuation in the reprint is unfamiliar to me.*

equal to what Stock, so you do but like it. Let but fortune favor us, & the  
World will be sure to admire our Prudence.<sup>42</sup>

Pope tells us more in this brief passage about his financial practices than that he too has been swept up by a “a wave of speculative excitement fed by the liberation of risk capital.” He is an active observer and participant in a world governed not simply by a profit motive, but in a world marked by the public-ness of financial activity.<sup>43</sup> He hears daily reports about new financial opportunities, about the rise and fall of stock prices, and he knows that financial activity is noticed by a “World” always ready to bestow praise or blame, for, as he later remarks “’tis Ignominious (in this Age of Hope and Golden Mountains) not to Venture.” Pope’s remark suggests both the pecuniary incentive behind venturing as well as the social and cultural forces operative behind financial activity. In remarks such as these we see that the common scholarly identification of rationalism and economic liberalism has great but nevertheless limited applicability to the scene of investment in the early eighteenth century, for Pope is not investing because he understands the intricate causal dynamics of the marketplace or even the features of the companies in which he chooses to invest. He does it because others do it, and he even goes so far as to acknowledge the absurdity of his investment goals (the hyperbolic “Age of Hope and Golden Mountains”). Moreover, he identifies his proclivity to invest not as an active good, but as an avoidance of an evil, it is “Ignominious *not* to Venture.” Pope’s sense of shame attaching to *not*-Venturing is a far cry from that historical narrative that insists that the

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<sup>42</sup> Printed in Chancellor (op. cit. 38) in fuller form. The letter is to James Eckersall, dated February 21, 1720.

<sup>43</sup> As Weber pointedly remarks in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, the profit motive extends throughout history: “The impulse to acquisition, pursuit of gain, of money, of the greatest possible amount of money, as in itself nothing to do with capitalism. This impulse exists and has existed among waiters, physicians, coachmen, artists, prostitutes, dishonest officials, soldiers, novelists, crusaders, gamblers and beggars. One may say that it has been common to all sorts and conditions of men at all times and in all countries of the earth, wherever the objective possibility of it is or has been given. It should be taught in the kindergarten of cultural history that this naïve idea of capitalism must be given up once and for all” (Weber xxxi).

eighteenth-century British subject adopted modern economic practices in the same way that philosophers followed Locke's empiricism or naturalists adopted Baconian methods. Of course, it is possible to read Pope's ignominy as what results when one fails to be rational, but the strict rationalist has little regard for the opinions of others. To be rational because others expect it of you is a profoundly irrational attitude. In any case, the practices of individual investors should not be exclusively understood as so many isolated manifestations of an avaricious culture or even as expressions of an ethos of rational economic behavior. These practices were also the constitutive elements of a public—and specifically, civic—sphere of financial activity where rumor, reputation, polite conversation, advertising, public houses, and the printed word all conspired to encourage and legitimate participation within the new financial world of early-eighteenth-century London.

### *Three Views of Financial Futurism: Defoe, Hume, Steele*

A cursory look at three perspectives on the nature of British finance, one at the end of this revolution, one at the dawn of this momentous era, one situated between these, one by David Hume, one by Daniel Defoe, and the last by Sir Richard Steele, will highlight some prominent fictions of the future and will raise some critical terms for the discussion of the more explicitly literary productions to which the chapters of this dissertation are devoted.

Reflecting on the problem of trade and the attendant institutions of money, labor, and finance, David Hume could confidently proclaim in 1752 that

[t]he greatness of a state, and the happiness of its subjects, how independent soever they may be supposed in some respects, are commonly allowed to be inseparable with regard to commerce; and as private men receive greater security, in the possession of their trade and riches, from the power of the

public, so the public becomes powerful in proportion to the opulence and extensive commerce of private men.<sup>44</sup>

Hume would go on in this essay to critique private enterprise bent solely upon the production and distribution of luxury commodities which do not directly benefit the public good, the central thesis of his essay is quite clear. In his efforts to distance himself from the scandalous claims made by Mandeville, Hume shows himself to be on the same side of a broader issue, namely, that individual financial well being is historically and conceptually connected to the well being of the nation. Of course, David Hume was not the first to offer such a formula, nor was Mandeville for that matter, but the axiomatic nature of his language is a useful marker of a wider social acceptance of the truth of the mutually beneficial nature of the relationship between individuals and the state, “with regard to commerce” this point is “commonly allowed.”

Daniel Defoe had less axiomatically announced the public value of “extensive commerce” in his 1704 pamphlet, whose title I provide in its entirety for good reason, *Giving Alms No Charity, and employing the Poor: A Grievance to the Nation, being an Essay Upon this Great Question, whether Work-houses, Corporations, and Houses of Correction for Employing the Poor, as now practis’d in England; or Parish-Stocks, as propos’d in a late Pamphlet, Entitled [sic.] A Bill for the better Relief, Imployment and Settlement of the Poor, &c. Are not mischievous to the Nation, tending to the Destruction of our Trade, and to Encrease the Number and Misery of the Poor*. The title suggests a certain autonomy of the spheres of Nation and Trade—mischievous to the nation is grammatically separated from the destruction of trade by a comma, the poor are bad for the Nation *and* for Trade—which the essay at times confirms and at others denies. In a tangentially related aside, concerning the practice

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<sup>44</sup> David Hume “Of Commerce” (orig. 1752) in *Essays, Moral Political, and Literary*, vol. II. Reprinted by Liberty Fund, Indianapolis, IN. 1985. P. 255.

of removing Englishmen to countries with fledgling economies, Defoe ambiguously yokes trade and national strength:

If the bringing the Flemings to England [which, in Defoe's opinion, Queen Elizabeth had rightly done a century earlier] brought with them their manufacture and trade, carrying our people abroad, especially to a country where the people work for little or nothing, what may it not do towards instructing that populous nation in such manufactures as may in time tend to the destruction of our trade, or the reducing our manufacture to an abatement in value, which will be felt at home by an abatement of wages, and that in provisions, and that in rent of land; and so the general stock sinks of course.<sup>45</sup>

The phrase "general stock" in the period could refer either to the nation's collective assets, the aggregate holdings of all *individuals* added together; or, it could be used to refer to the possessions of England considered as ultimately the property of the crown. Unlike Hume, who explicitly links commerce and country through an affirmation of their mutually beneficial relationship, Defoe's sense of the connectedness here is limited to a unidirectional causal chain of events that culminate in the strength or weakness of the nation. It is precisely this sort of causal analysis that Hume wishes to avoid in his essay:

When a man deliberates concerning his conduct in any *particular* affair, and forms schemes in politics, trade, economy, or any business in life, he never ought to draw his arguments too fine, or connect too long a chain of consequences together. Something is sure to happen, that will disconcert his reasoning, and produce an event different from what he expected. (Hume 254)

Hume's brief rendition of his famous critique of causality elaborated in Book I, Section XII of the *Treatise*, seems aimed directly at the kind of reasoning that Defoe performs in his arguments against the relocation of English workers. As Defoe defines the relationship between private commerce and public stock, the regulated movement of workers will constitute an event that will hurt British manufacture, which will produce a surplus of laborers and thus a decrease in wages, which will in turn cause a

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<sup>45</sup> Daniel Defoe "Giving Alms No Charity" (1704). In *The True Born Englishman and Other Writings*. Edited P.N. Furbank and W. R. Owens. London: Penguin Books, 1997.

reduction in the amount of provisions available to the laborer, which will necessitate a drop in land value that in the end hurts the “general stock.” Where Defoe asserts a relation of causal dependence, Hume proposes an essential connectedness of trade and public welfare, a value-producing circuit whereby individual improvement is *both the cause and effect* of national strength, a positive feedback loop that does not so much endorse a type of economic behavior as assert its ineluctability. We cannot simply attribute the different approaches to the problem of commerce in Hume and Defoe as the result of capricious differences of style for I intend to show that kind of predictive rationality that characterizes Defoe’s account is an important dimension of the then-nascent financial revolution. After a period of national credit stabilization, however, namely, the years 1710-1750, Hume could speak “generally,” for this is what he declares he shall do, on commerce, the nation, interest rates, and other financial matters with a confidence and certainty that simply was not available to the early avatars of the view that private enterprise was beneficial to the public good.

The differences between Hume and Defoe are so vast and obvious as to hardly warrant further consideration here, but we might ask what happened between the times of the writing of these essays to produce such a vivid discrepancy in the representation of the links between trade and nation. We have on the one hand, an ambiguous and overwrought quasi-prophetic glimpse of an economic future spiraling towards destruction in the 1704 pamphlet by Defoe; on the other, a certain understanding and articulation of the essential mutuality of commercial and national interests and practices. To the extent that Hume has gone beyond the need to formulate concrete causal links between individual and national economic activity we can say that his comment mystifies the process by which these two spheres influence, determine and define one another. This is not to suggest, however, that Defoe’s account is any more true to life, but that for someone attempting to assess the consequences of federal

intervention in the private sphere shortly after the landmark alterations in British finance in the 1690s, the dynamics of the economy were simple and calculable. In short, the future was contingent but knowable because its mechanisms were still rather basic.

A major consequence of the financial revolution was the perception of heightened regularity and predictability of financial dynamics, which accounts for the almost philosophical tone of Hume's remark. But, paradoxically, the complex interlacing of private and public economic activity in fact meant that the ability for non-specialists to interpret and articulate the mechanics of financial institutions was increasingly challenged. Indeed, essays by Hume on economics and finance bear such general titles as "Of Commerce," "Of Money," "Of Taxes," and "Of the Balance of Trade." In "Of Public Credit" we see Hume call on the exemplary frugal Lacedemonians at one point, and citing the "eternally true" wisdom of Tacitus' remarks on the credulity of the masses during the reign of Vitellius in AD 69—types of evidence Defoe would have found useless in the interpretation and analysis of financial systems. Hume's remarks in these essay bear striking witness to a conceptual density of futurity that is entirely absent in the writings of early-eighteenth-century financial commentators like Defoe. As can be expected, the empiricist author of "Of Public Credit" describes his cautionary speculations on the dangers of a system of public credit as the products of the limited faculty of "reason" that "foresees as clearly almost as she can do any thing that lies in the womb of time" (365).<sup>46</sup> After suggesting that someday England may find itself without any truly remarkable new inventions, without the possibility of additional taxes or excises, and generally strapped for new revenues to pay off the interest of debts to the people, Hume ceases his predictions by

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<sup>46</sup> Essentially, Hume argues that a system of public credit leads the government into a state of idleness and laxity, which, if always financially insecure, it would constantly endeavor to redress. Hume then outlines a series of hypothetical consequences of a public bankruptcy, although they too are conjectural and non-specific about the mechanics of default.

commenting that “though the imperfect state of our political knowledge, and the narrow capacities of men, make it difficult to foretell the effects which will result from any untried measure, the seeds of ruin are here scattered with such profusion as not to escape the eye of the most careless observer” (357). In both of these instances, as well as the copious allusions to the practices of the ancients, we see a concern with the outcome of financial events but an admitted inability to concretely understand future economic contingency. The first of the quotations figures the future as the inscrutable bearer of events yet to come, significantly gendered as a woman. Unlike the open, concrete and visible future of Defoe, here futurity is equated with the concealed, incipient/unrealized, and invisible offspring of woman. Presumably, if we had a more “perfect state of political knowledge” and a less capricious set of policy makers and merchants, we might be able to more precisely peer into this womb and discover the mysteries of our financial future. But without an advanced politico-gynecological science, we can only draw on the “eternally true” examples of antiquity or the hypothetical contrivances of speculative philosophy.

The distinction between Hume and Defoe should help to define the kinds of issues raised by the problem of the future in the early eighteenth century. They may be classed under the heading “fictions of futurity” as alternate types of representation of the individual’s relationship to both the personal and national future. This is not an arbitrary pairing of “futures,” however, as the narratives of individuals engaged in commercial or market activity constantly come up against the broader and less well defined notion of a recently “financialized” nation. One of the more interesting—as well as exemplary—texts that helped to establish the grounds for individual financial futurism comes from Sir Richard Steele, not in his periodical writings, but in a pair of occasional essays written in 1720-1721. Steele avoided the question of prediction altogether not by presuming its possibility (as Defoe had done), or by attesting to its



impossibility (as Hume seems to do), but by shifting the very grounds upon which financial events might be understood. Instead of relating to the world of finance as a complex and highly volatile system, Steele drew a simple picture of a national family. It allowed him to appeal to the confused masses by representing economic activity as no more complicated than simple husbandry, and he appealed to the anti-futurist contingent (though, as I have noted, anti-futurism was not so much a distinct position, as a feature of nearly all positions at different times) not by justifying the world of the new finance, but by casting financial activity in the same light as filial duty. If Pope's sense of shame came from the fact that he would seem merely ignorant if he didn't invest, Steele's common-sense defense of the new finance allowed that shame to take on a moral cast, to become guilt. Pope's concern with investment thus seems to be founded on aesthetic grounds, while Steele's is founded on a kind of nationalist ethics. Perhaps no one articulated so clearly the complex bond established in time by mechanisms of the new finance as Steele did in his brief pamphlet, *A Nation a Family: Being the Sequel of the Crisis of Property: or, A Plan for the Improvement of the South-Sea Proposal* (1720). In this pamphlet, Steele argues for the conversion of government loans into annuities (where the principal sum invested is gradually repaid to the investors until their death, interest accruing over the years insuring that the amount paid to the investors compensates them for their initial trust), a form of debt which was essentially forward-looking and required great actuarial foresight both to justify the investment on the part of the individual and to accurately predict whether the debtor would be able to repay over time. While the particularities of Steele's proposal are interesting from a financial-historical standpoint, what is of greater importance for the narrative I am attempting to sketch here is the way in which he figures the complex circuits of investments which are beyond the cognizance and lived reality of the citizen and the more local notion of family:

Considering a Nation as [a family], the great Bargain of ten Years Purchase, for the Lives of ten [investors] thus ally'd, is like a careful Provision for the elder Children, and the whole House made stronger and wealthier, while any one of them lives, by the Loss of any of its Kindred.

It will make the Father of the Family still more powerful; and to explain that Word yet further, the Sovereign more Popular, more Great and more Safe; and that Popularity, Greatness, and Safety, incorporated with the Happiness of his People, and conducing to it.

It preserves the Superintendency, Guardianship, and by Consequence the Credit of the Legislature, and ties the whole People, their Lawgivers and Governors, by a Band (which only can join the great and little, good and bad Men together) their common Interest. (29-30)

Steele's remarks help the individual to imagine the way in which his personal, isolated investment in government or company issued annuities might help to contribute to the good of the whole nation, the strength of the monarch, the legitimacy of the parliament, and indeed, his neighbors, brothers, and parents. The collapsing of distinctions between these discrete identities accomplished by Steele's slippery metaphors and analogies does not so much mystify what the shift from a pre-modern concept of economic "Brotherhood" to a more modern and post-Reformation financial "Otherhood" as reveal the structure of futuristic thought which subtends that transition. His words are a testament to the complex idea that local acts of self-interested behavior can be understood as morally palatable to the extent that they might be included in a larger future-oriented narrative in which those acts contribute to a circuit of wealth generation. Local acts of interest, then, might be excused on the grounds that they secure the strength of the state. This justification differs, however, from an older economic notion of charity, in which local "interested" disbursement of wealth to the poor, to the tenantry, to the localities, secured the legitimacy of the landed aristocracy in that here the strength of the state, the national economy, has as its end the further *financial* interests of the local investor. Money, then, is what is at issue, not social stability or confirmation of rank or status. The value-producing circuit

of investment, national improvement and, thus, repayment, is much more temporally and spatially complex than simply feeding one's family or making one's father look good to others. Steele's third point, that concerning the legitimacy of the Parliament, in fact requires him, perhaps owing to a certain analogical impossibility, to abandon the idea that a nation is a family, even as he claims that these reasons (helping the children, the father, and the legislature) is what entitles him to name his pamphlet *A Nation a Family*. The breakdown here, and in the vexed identity of the investor (is it a father who provides for his children, or the children who provide for their father?) successfully blurs for Steele the lines that make local investment and national responsibility seem like autonomous projects, clearing space for local acts of interested behavior by using nationalism as a kind of alibi for the potentially sordid reality of financial avarice.

In the prequel to this tract, *The Crisis of Property*, Steele responds to questions and concerns regarding the South Sea act and annuities, offering comments that would have served equally well in refuting arguments made by Drake in his 1702 pamphlet attacking usury, but were specifically designed to counter those which had been recently revived by Archibald Hutcheson (M.P. for Hastings and opponent of the South Sea company and other forms of stock-jobbing).<sup>47</sup> Steele, who was a supporter, along with Walpole, of the South Sea Company and the stock-trading it promoted, points out that the nature of the financial circuit he would later analogize in *A Nation a Family* was predicated on the threat to England from abroad, and as such can be seen as an avatar of the "sinews of power" thesis which John Brewer has so brilliantly outlined in his study of the matrix of finance, trade, militarism and nationalism in his book of the same name. It is also interesting to note that Steele was not just identifying the way in which a military/financial complex undergirded and necessitated a

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<sup>47</sup> James Drake. *An Essay Concerning the Necessity of Equal Taxes; and The Dangerous Consequences of the Encouragement given to Usury among us of late years*. Printed for Robert Gibson, 1702.

developing financial order, but that he was also articulating a view of credit which Drake's opponents had used just after the landmark financial developments of the 1690s. Steele argues that it is not right to alter the terms of the annuities in which people had invested (as Hutcheson had argued for in Parliament) even if it puts a burden on the government to repay those loans, for

Power, in the last Resort of it, is far from being Arbitrary Power, that is to say, Arbitrary with an Indifference to Good and Evil; but such Persons so appointed, are the more engag'd to walk by the Rules of Humanity, good Sense, and Justice, from the Consideration that their Judgment is to be decisive; it is therefore something rash to imagine that even a Legislature is to be justified in all it should do, were it to act against the known Sense of Mankind, and against the Nature of Things. Good and Evil are in themselves unchangeable, nor can Time, Place, Person, or any other Circumstance, alter the Nature of 'em; for tho' never so great a Crown, never so solemn or awful an Assembly should pronounce a thing, in itself *Unrighteous*, to be just and equitable, it would still retain its natural Deformity, and be exactly what it was, before it receiv'd the vain Sanction of their Formalities...

To make a Man come under the odious Imputations of Usury and Extortion, it is necessary to prove, that, without any Hazard to himself, he demanded from his Debtor more than the lawful Interest for his Money; but in this Case the Interest could not be unlawful, for the Bargain was made with Law-givers, his Money could not be Secure, for it was lent to the State itself in Danger of Ruin. [England engaged itself in a war it could not win without further financing]...

These Lenders saw the Condition of the Borrowers, knew they had not Security, but from the Hopes that the Debtors Condition would grow better by their Money, and from the Zeal and Affection to such Borrowers, parted with their Fortunes. (9-11)

Steele makes several points in this lengthy passage that are worth noting. First, he defends the universality and fundamental atemporality of justice, preempting any assumptions or arguments that would propose that a contract made at one place, in one time, might have its integrity compromised by the fluctuations of the world. In effect, Steele's remark (which is by no means revolutionary in this respect) on the absolute nature of such things as truth and justice, underpin the market, which we often mistakenly label as amoral. The opposite is in fact true: the forward-looking nature of contractual agreements—in which foresight plays an absolutely pivotal role in a

contingent world of accidents—is far from being amoral. For the contractual agreements which make it up and are necessarily limited to particular times and places are in fact legitimate only to the extent that we admit that entering into one delivers us to the unchanging moral universe of the codified promise. This is a decidedly anti-nominalist position, for regardless of how an act is received or “pronounced,” if wrong “it retains its natural Deformity, and [is] exactly what it was.”

The second point that Steele makes here is that investment is both deeply embroiled in the eternal nation (as its motor) as well as somehow aloof from it. Steele naturalizes through his discourse the idea that a private monied interest that could loan to the government under which it finds sanctuary could, if it *chose* to do so, opt to *not* lend its assistance to the state (their “Zeal and Affection” for this particular government being presumably contingent or willed things). Moreover, it might be the case, in Steele’s formulation, that a monied interest *should* refuse to lend the money if it deems the situation too hazardous to place such a wager on the outcome of a national military engagement (in an ironic twist, “Zeal and Affection” for the country cloud the rational economic judgment, but they are still worthy of applause). According to Steele’s logic, given that it is a *choice* to invest in the state that underlies a given market economy, it implicitly for Steele follows that the loss of that state’s protection would only entail a change in the nameplates on state office doors, that, hypothetically, a French or Dutch controlled England would respect the forms and indeed, the persons, of England’s own native economy. (This is a highly amusing and optimistic formulation given England’s tendency to a) view other European economic orders as faulty, and b) view conquered or colonized peoples’ native economies as irrational at best). Consequently, the position of Steele undermines the centrality of England to the larger notion of a universal financial order (to the extent that another country’s rule would not affect the investors who made the wise decision to stay out of

the fray entirely) while it positions the patriotic investor in a position of moral superiority by suggesting that he made the right decision—however irrational—to invest in his country. The upshot of this elaboration of the assumptions in Steele’s position is that the logic of the new finance is universal, that is, the financial world of the investor would not be fundamentally changed by being under a different flag (they will have other investment opportunities, even if the government under which they live changes), but that particular morality in relation to the market is governed by one’s choice to be loyal to the nation and the domestic economy. Steele thus has it both ways. On the one hand, by allowing for the possibility that an un-financed state will not result in the destruction of investment structures, by implying that a wise investor might choose to let his nation be conquered and wait for a better nation to oversee the course of exchange and investment, and lastly by refusing to acknowledge the possibility that an un-financed England might mean economic devastation for English financiers, Steele naturalizes (through a kind of “transnationalization” strategy) a concept of financial risk. On the other hand, by opening up the possibility that financial risk is universal, that all nations obey the same market laws, Steele also puts himself in the dangerous position of having to defend a world organized exclusively around the logics of market, logics which unrestricted might strike his reader as too gross for contemplation. To resolve this, to limit the unbridled financial, Steele offers his readers nationalistic sentiment. The wise investor, regardless of his economic motives, should at some level be characterized by “Zeal and Affection” for his country. This is a contingent and willful matter that is intended by Steele to put the brakes on someone who might actually believe that it is wise to wait for the barbarians across the channel to present better investment opportunities.

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In the chapters that follow, I draw on various components of this large and relatively uncharted historical territory. In Chapter 2, I look at the way in which Eliza Haywood's amatory fictions rely upon a politics of the body to establish differences between legitimate and illegitimate modes of futurism. One of the consequences of thinking of Haywood's fiction in terms of the broader problems of financial futurism is that women end up inhabiting a space also occupied by men insofar as gender is not determinative when it comes to projects and anticipations, that both male and female characters are capable of suffering from an inadequately somatic experience of oneness with the social order and are conversely likely to be valorized for attending to the physical sensations of intimate and social love. Whereas the explicitly financial literature of the period discusses a Subject who in retrospect seems masculine in virtue of the text's very failure to say as much, novels by Haywood insist upon the idea that women were prone to the same virtues and vices as men in terms of futurism, other highly complex gender dynamics in her fiction notwithstanding (such as the fully gendered problem of chastity, for instance).

In Chapter 3, I provide a brief history of prudence, a trait thought to depend entirely upon one's ability to consider future time and consequence, on the way towards analyzing Fielding's formal dilemmas throughout *Tom Jones*, but especially towards its end. When reading *Tom Jones* with an eye to the problem of futurism, particularly as it develops out of the rejection of Providentialism discussed above, the importance of the prudence question emerges anew. Whereas critics have heretofore been inclined to think of prudence simply as good judgment, I focus upon the inherently temporal character of what has been thought of as a relatively unproblematic moral category on the way toward offering an entirely new context for understanding how readers might have related to his novel. Perhaps more importantly than this, by presenting the conflicts of *Tom Jones* as conflicts concerning futurity, it

is possible to see deeper levels of conflict between the novel and its story, between the reader's ability to see Tom's naked virtue in spite of Blifil's efforts (thanks to a quasi-Providential narrator who sees and reveals the truth of Tom) and the primary goal of making Tom a prudent man (where he no longer needs a narrator/Providential guarantee to be happy).

In the final chapter, I present two related but distinct arguments concerning the work of Samuel Johnson. In the first, I show how Johnson's reliance upon the rhetorical devices and figures of the aesthetics of the sublime may have unwittingly transformed what he thought to be a fictive and hollow temporal category into a dangerous and exciting domain. This tendency in his fiction refers us back to the conceptual density of financial futurity of which Hume wrote in his essays. The second argument traces this relation between the future and the sublime as it pertains to Johnson's own theory of narrative, *Rasselas* being the text primarily addressed in this portion. I see Johnson as occupying a special place in the history of the future because his critique of expectation and speculation, though drawing partially on the kinds of objections to expectation that seventeenth-century writers such as Mosse had offered, ends up validating futurism and the adventurous subject through such categories as danger and uncertainty which Johnson himself thought to be damning. I argue, perhaps perversely in light of most popular perceptions of Johnson, that he prepared English modernity, in spite of himself, for the kind of adventurous speculative behavior that Hazlitt would target at the dawn of the nineteenth century. In this respect, Johnson marks one provisional end to the eighteenth-century's negotiation of futurism and Providentialism, illustrating the fact that even the most vocal opponents of the new culture of finance and speculation assumed that the future, with its prospects and its dangers, was there to stay.



What links these chapters together, including this history, is the sense that the future occupied a special place in the morality, politics, and aesthetics of eighteenth-century literature, and that the problems posed by the Providentialist challenges to financial expectation were being worked out during the great print explosion of the eighteenth century.

## Chapter 2

### Toilet Mysteries: Moral Sense in a Financial World

Janet Todd observes in her discussion of women poets and novelists of the long eighteenth century that “the great age of English satire” was marked by heightened literary production, and, within that literature, a noticeable increase in the virulence and violence of male writers’ rhetorical attacks upon women. The great satires of the period, Todd maintains, depended largely upon “embodiments of threatening and castrating female autonomy,” typically finding figural embodiment in the figures of “the Amazon, the whore and the witch.”<sup>48</sup> In such a context, it was necessary for women writers to consciously and strategically legitimate their authority and often conceal their involvement in the expanding world of print culture. Todd provides an essential strategy for understanding the challenges faced by the woman writer throughout the eighteenth century, but the generality of her goals at times necessitates a hasty projection of motivations and the ideological preconditions of or the masculine attack on women’s writing. At the risk of perfunctorily reducing her characterization of the circumstances in which oppressed women writers found themselves, it is perhaps fair to say that Todd envisages an intellectual, moral, and social milieu not unlike that which continues to oppress many women today. For Todd, male misogyny founds itself, then and now, on transhistorical anxieties concerning castration and guilt (in the psyche), elaborates itself on a fundamentally empirical masculine disgust of the female body (in the body), and reproduces itself in the quintessentially masculine public spheres of print, politics, and the market economy (in the society). As far as this characterization goes towards the kind of

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<sup>48</sup> Janet Todd *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800*, London: Virago Press, 1989. P. 33.

understanding of the female writer's process of self-fashioning Todd wishes to provide, it is absolutely unobjectionable, but its sufficiency depends in part on our willingness or unwillingness to consider the contexts that were unique to the period Todd examines. I would argue that what Todd takes to be indicative of a generally misogynist moment can in part be traced to the ubiquitous reactions to forward-looking practices whose contours and logics I described in the opening chapter of this dissertation. The female body, specifically when depicted in moments of self-fashioning or pre-paration, proves to be a uniquely charged site for the articulation of a more generalized anxiety about the inadequacy of a theory of sociability understood as accidental, unplanned, passive, and selfless. The reason for this is that the financial revolution—in its rejection of what Michael McKeon has called “the aristocratic ideology” and in its adoption of a code of ethics principally founded upon monetary power—fundamentally transformed the place of women not just in the market, but in society in general.<sup>49</sup> However, the female body is culturally significant as a trope for a broader ideological reorientation away from what Castiglione had called *sprezzatura*, that effortless effort of courtier politeness, towards modes of social involvement predicated on strategic acts of self-definition and the conscious manipulation of the social world. In certain fictions by Eliza Haywood, gender is used as a marker of differences within the broader sphere of anticipation, thereby securing the legitimacy of certain forward-looking practices while limiting out others. The female body, at the toilet and in the calculative world of amorous intrigue towards which the toilet was supposedly oriented, often provides the alibi for a culture that knew speculation to be both necessary and highly problematic. Social speculations, or forward-looking attempts to manipulate or adjust the interpersonal order, were on the one hand the *sine*

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<sup>49</sup> This is obviously simplification of a very complex process of ideological negotiation. In *Defoe and the Defense of Commerce*, Thomas Keith Meier (op. cit. 8) very persuasively shows that the defenders of the new finance were not so concerned with rejecting the aristocratic ideology as appropriating certain elements within it to make the transition to a new economic order more acceptable to the masses.

*qua non* of polite life and on the other, a mark of one's interested, selfish, and therefore allegedly anti-social disposition. The toilet serves as a crucial trope for the expression of this contradiction, while its literary representations ethically excuse speculation generally understood by associating the toilet's more scandalous features with the stereotypical foibles of the female sex.

The title of this chapter, as coarse as it is, asks one simple question: what is so mysterious about the female toilet? Through a brief preliminary reading of the toilet scene from Pope's "Rape of the Lock" I intend to elucidate the primary motifs of an aspect of the speculative ideology as it pertains to the forward-looking, calculative (as opposed to intuitive), and ultimately disingenuous scene of female aesthetic preparation in both local instances of sociability (seeing and speaking with other people) and general conceptions of the individual's relationship to society (what it means to be a part of a national society of Englishmen). Moral sense theory's concept of sociability<sup>50</sup> takes as its starting point the intuitive and sensible aspect of the English disposition, which binds autonomous individuals together and which definitionally excludes those gestures towards sociability deriving from a speculative and interested approach to human interactions in the public sphere. The toilet plays an important role in the misogynist onslaught that is eighteenth-century Tory satire not because—or, at least, not *just* because—of some transhistorical masculine anxiety, but because it at one and the same time symbolized a rejection of the alleged sensible bonds between members of English polite society (what Shaftesbury called "that social love and common affection that is natural to mankind")<sup>51</sup> while it simultaneously intimates the efficacy of rationalistic and calculated strategies that are

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<sup>50</sup> As this chapter is not concerned primarily with the specifics of moral sense theory, I use the term loosely to designate Shaftesbury's idea that social bonds are generated out of an innate moral capacity and that community is secured through this type of bond.

<sup>51</sup> Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury "Sensus communis, an essay on the freedom of wit and humour in a letter to a friend" in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* ed. Lawrence E. Klein. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. P. 53.

requisite for modern sociability (“I would go out tonight, but I haven’t got a stitch to wear,” drones Morrissey). In the final section of this chapter, I examine this trope as it pertains to Eliza Haywood’s amatory fictions, focusing particularly on *Love in Excess*.

### *Mystic Order*

At the start of that fateful day in which Belinda’s rape occurs, Belinda opens her eyes to a *Billet-doux*, lying upon her Toilet. Pope aligns female sentience, wakefulness, and consciousness with the experience of seduction and intrigue represented by the letter. The opening of the eyes is intimately connected to what it sees, for as E.H. Gombrich stated, and W.J.T. Mitchell has emphasized, “the innocent eye is blind;” that is, there is no pure act of seeing independent of the conceptual apparatus and historical contextualization that marks the scene of viewing. Belinda’s vision of the letter encodes her history, which we take to be one in which a *Billet-doux* not only means something generally, but also constitutes a wake-up-call, an invigoration sufficient to bring her out of her slumber and drag her (and the reader) to the toilet where day begins. All warnings presented in the dreamy vision of Belinda’s sleeping state, Ariel’s in particular, are lost in the moment of reading the “*Wounds*, *Charms*, and *Ardors*...” presented in the letter (1.119).<sup>52</sup> Pope may be deliberately ambiguous here, as it is not clear whether the letter makes use of terms “Wounds,” “Charms,” and “Ardors,” or if Belinda is able to assimilate more particular elements of this letter to the essential conventions of the *Billet-doux* tradition. Do the words belong to the letter’s author or to Belinda’s understanding of the letter? The former would imply a certain ignorant innocence on Belinda’s part, the latter a pattern or history of experience with the world and conventions of the amorous epistle. This ambiguity allows Belinda to be read as both pure and tainted, an ambiguity that allows the reader

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<sup>52</sup> Alexander Pope “The Rape of the Lock” in the Riverside Edition of *The Poetry and Prose of Alexander Pope*. Edited by Aubrey Williams. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969.

to be both sympathetic of and critical towards her and which the rest of the poem exploits to great effect. The shifting of consciousness, from sleep to wakefulness, from innocence to corruption, mediated as it is by a *Billet-doux*, is significant, for Pope is not merely writing a tale of female molestation here, but is fashioning a myth of social consciousness, its beginnings and its consequences.

Pope then gives us a description of the toilet, which I include here in its entirety, as I will refer to it extensively in the following pages:

And now, unveil'd, the *Toilet* stands display'd,  
 Each Silver Vase in mystic Order laid.  
 First, rob'd in White, the Nymph intent adores  
 With Head uncover'd, the *Cosmetic* Pow'rs.  
 A heav'nly Image in the Glass appears,  
 To that she bends, at her Altar's side,  
 Trembling, begins the sacred Rites of Pride.  
 Unnumber'd Treasures ope at once, and here  
 The various Off'rings of the World appear;  
 From each she nicely culls with curious Toil,  
 And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring Spoil.  
 This Casket *India's* glowing Gems unlocks,  
 And all *Arabia* breathes from yonder Box.  
 The Tortoise here and Elephant unite,  
 Transform'd to *Combs*, the speckled and the white.  
 Here Files of Pins extend their shining Rows,  
 Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, *Billet-doux*.  
 Now awful Beauty puts on all its Arms;  
 The Fair each moment rises in her Charms,  
 Repairs her Smiles, awakens ev'ry Grace,  
 And calls forth all the Wonders of her Face;  
 Sees by Degrees a purer Blush arise,  
 And keener Lightnings quicken in her Eyes.  
 The busy *Sylphs* surround their darling Care;  
 These set the Head, and those divide the Hair,  
 Some fold the Sleeve, while others plait the Gown;  
 And *Betty's* praised for Labours not her own. (1.121-148)

The common interpretation of the passage's most famous line, "Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, *Billet-doux*," runs something like this: Pope collapses the distinctions between these objects, figuring them all as interchangeable commodities in a superficial environment where the sanctified Bible attains to the same sordid reality and meaning as Belinda's various other possessions. In pluralizing "Bible," Pope

underscores this universal leveling by appealing to the reproducibility characteristic of print culture, while the alliterative connection of “Bible” and “Billet-doux” suggests that the impious forces of secularization has something also to do with linguistic contamination from the never-ending semiotic reserve of superficial silliness and depravity that is France. As useful as this reading is for an understanding of the literary inflections of these various modernizing forces, it prevents us from considering a slightly more troubling possibility raised by a reversal of these terms. I would submit that Pope’s depiction of the toilet might be read to suggest the opposite of this interpretation, that Belinda’s toilet may in fact *be* holy, although this holiness is one appropriate to an increasingly secular world, where enchanted connections happen not in the ethereal heavens, but in the mysterious realm of social interaction. Whereas the standard line of argument simply picks up on the fact that Pope is criticizing the adornment of the body and all that this might entail, it is equally possible to see Pope acknowledging the very validity of Belinda’s approach to sociability. As one critic has recently put it, “[cosmetics] on women’s faces exemplify the pervasive anxiety about female surfaces, but because cosmetics have such a volatile, transferable presence, they also become available as the site for other anxieties, other concerns.”<sup>53</sup> Taking the polysemy of adornment as a useful point of departure, we might read the “*Cosmetic Pow’rs*” bestowed upon Belinda by way of puffs, powders, and patches—as well as their literary counterpart, *Billet-doux*—as articles of the gravest social significance for someone prepping herself for entry into a social order where appearance does indeed matter quite a lot. Along these lines, Laura Brown and others have called attention to the way in which the female body functions as a site of blame and justification for the colonizing mercantilism that brought “The various Off”rings

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<sup>53</sup> Tassie Gwilliam “Cosmetic Poetics: Coloring Faces in the Eighteenth Century” in *Body and Text in the Eighteenth Century* ed. Veronica Kelly and Dorothea E. von Mücke. Palo Alto, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1994. Gwilliam’s article specifically addresses the intersection of race and cosmetics in two eighteenth-century texts.

of the World” to England. Women become figures of rapacious consumption to justify and mask the decidedly more literal kinds of rape that the masculine force of imperialism had inflicted—and would continue to inflict—upon foreign peoples and lands. To the extent that the female does function as such an excuse and mystification of imperial ideology, it is also possible then to see how imperialism intimately depends upon a mode of social preparation and planning that structurally resembles the logic of financial experience. The socially calculating subject that is necessitated by the upheavals of a domestic financial transformation curiously becomes the grounds for imperialist projects whose ultimate goal is to solidify the domestic economy. In creating not just a woman, but a modern social being, characterized by her ability to look forward to entrance into the social order, Pope testifies to the legitimacy of colonialism, not just by critiquing the aberrant feminine consumer within an otherwise legitimate commodity culture, but by intimating that bringing the world to England depends to a great extent on both the presence of a market for commodities *and* an already legitimate speculative ideology that valorizes social and financial planning. In a Mandevillian sense, Belinda’s consumption of luxury items translates into larger social and economic strength; but, what is also of note is the way in which Belinda’s forward-looking, speculative cognitive disposition telescopes the larger ideological project of legitimating a certain speculative financial mode to the extent that the preparations she makes for her social entrance analogize fiscal anticipations.<sup>54</sup> As we move into the poem’s second canto, we are presented with a vision of this success:

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<sup>54</sup> This is as good a place as any to note the persistence of this analogical connection in contemporary American culture. I recently picked up a handful of pamphlets at my local bank, the titles of which are “Saving for a rainy day and so much more” (featuring a fleece clad upper-middle-class father on some sort of mountain top holding his daughter in one hand and a pair of binoculars in the other; inner images include attractive and well dressed young men and women “hanging out”); “Planning ahead for every stage of your life” (featuring a contented elderly pair leaning on the hood of their luxury car in the middle of what appears to be an Irish countryside; I am fascinated by the ambitiousness of the pamphlet’s title); “Insuring a more secure future for your family and business” (featuring a simple and



Not with more Glories, in th' Etherial Plain,  
 The Sun first rises o'er the purpled Main,  
 Than issuing forth, the Rival of his Beams  
 Lanch'd on the Bosom of the Silver *Thames*.  
 Fair Nymphs, and well-drest Youths around her shone,  
 But ev'ry Eye was fix'd on her alone. (2.1-6)

Although Belinda stands out among a “well-drest” company, the reader is forced to acknowledge the powerful effects of her planning ritual. Pope soon after notes that whatever “Female Errors” Belinda may possess, by which the reader is reminded of the disingenuous self-interestedness and amatory excessiveness that put her at her toilet in the first place, “Look on her Face, and you’ll forget ‘em all” (2.17-18). At some level, this transcendent beauty is quite earthly.

Pope’s passage emphasizes the mystery, or ritual, of the toilet. The language of rite and holiness saturates the passage. He writes of “mystic Order,” robes, higher powers and images from heaven, an altar, strange transmogrifications and combinations of animals and objects. The transformations effected by and in this scene of ritual are attributed to Betty rather than the magical Sylphs. She is “Th’ inferior Priestess” of line 127, and raises the time-worn but then still deadly serious question—at least for a Papist such as Pope himself—of whether a priestly mediator was necessary for connection with the divine. One critic has said of this realignment of objects and practices of traditional religious significance that in “a society where credit-payment was dissolving the social frame into a shifting mobility of objects that were desired and expectations that were fantasised about, a comic displacement of

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“artistic” image of hands holding one another; the inner-images of this pamphlet, like many others, invariably feature someone poring over a newspaper in a coffeehouse, or in Mrs. Dalloway-like fashion, buying flowers at a New York corner store: both typical markers of social engagement and economic independence); and “Focusing on your vision of the future” (featuring a shot of two silver-haired lovers, hands locked, relaxing on a quiet beach and staring at an ocean which is ironically quite out-of-focus; but, as my speculations concerning Johnson below suggest, the infinite openness of the future invariably turns toward the sublime, and this oceanic image—as well as the mountain-top in the first pamphlet discussed above—would seem to lend some added currency to this idea). All pamphlets published by M&T Investment group, 2003 (the first discussed was published in 2005) M&T Securities, Inc. Although the publication date was 2003, they were collected during a routine bank stop in April 2005.

values in the famous line from the equally famous toilet scene, ‘Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux’ (1.138), satirizes the collapse of traditional religious associations as an accommodation to the new order” (Nicholson 31). This tells us that Pope effects a critique of this realignment, but it does not explain why the toilet is the occasion for this critique, nor does it explain Pope’s ambiguous avowal of the toilet’s power. Surely the general decay of religion in everyday English life, present in everything from the alleged moral turpitude of the clergy to the ascendancy of sermonizing in print culture, offered more direct subjects for Pope’s critique. I would argue that part of Pope’s interest in the toilet stems from its potency as a modern instrument of transformation, but that what makes the toilet particularly attractive as an object of critique is that it allows him to accept the speculative generally by ascribing its failures and excesses to “Female Errors.” Whereas the Bible can be thought of as a foundational text for a predominantly Christian (if not exclusively Catholic) world, amorous epistles are the foundational texts in Pope’s vision of modern community. Billet-doux provide the impetus behind ritual, raising Belinda from her self-absorbed slumber, propelling her towards and ushering her through a ritual of adornment that turns the naked and blank body into a social being. This is a transformation that is as shamefully appalling as it is wondrous. The overwhelmingly misogynistic rhetoric of Swift’s toilet poetry, on the other hand, owes part of its virulence to the fact that the toilet or the dressing room is a representation of the failures of modernity and speculative anticipation that Pope’s poem at the very least acknowledges. Swift’s poems along these lines focus on the breakdown, the undressing, the revelation of the body; Pope’s scene in *Rape of the Lock* concentrates on the building-up, the adornment, the “improvement” of the body, even if he is equivocal as to its authenticity after its transformation.

This reading is not meant to undermine the blunt truth of Todd's claim that Tory satire is predicated upon a vision of woman as "an Amazon, a whore, or a witch," but is rather meant to suggest that the site of female transformation from naked body into social being is the site for contention concerning the very idea of the social. Community, understood as an artificial construct built out of a publicly mediated rhetoric of togetherness, common identity, common ideals and desires, is very much at issue in these scenes. Pope's poem figurally links the concept of sociability itself to religiously problematic and increasingly obsolete gestures of ritualistic transformation associated with priests, enchantment, and magic; and, while the skewed politics of his picture of the artificial woman render his poem highly suspect to the progressive modern reader, it is important to note as well his implicit recognition of the strangely mysterious conversion that might be effected with some puffs and some powders. This conversion of the body into the social being is not unlike Marx's description in *Capital* of the transformation of the produced object into that "very simple thing" he calls a commodity. Marx noted the similarity between the obfuscation of human labor in the commodity and ritualistic fetishism; and Pope is equally right, if less grave, in noting that Belinda's transformation—from body to social being—is akin to a mystic transformation. Just as the commodity's value lies not so much in its use as in its exchange value, Pope's description of the shift from body to social being implies that the labor that has gone into this "making" is oriented towards the circulation of her body in a social field. So, in an ironic twist, commodities (puffs, powders, etc.) turn out to be the bare objects of use-value (raw materials, or what for Marx antedated the commodity form), while Belinda adorned is an object of exchange-value in an economy where the general equivalent is not money but beauty, allowing us to compare her to the others in the boat in second canto. While Pope's overall tone leads us to conclude that he saw this transformation as in some respects comic, his playful

vision is nonetheless tainted by the hard truth that Belinda's adornment, for all of its disingenuousness, works all too well for her.

I see this aspect of the toilet scene in *Rape of the Lock* as highly significant given its implications on the theory of moral sense that Terry Eagleton has associated with nascent bourgeois culture in the period. He writes in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*:

[Moral] sense theory testifies to a bankrupt tendency of bourgeois ideology, forced to sacrifice the prospect of a *rational* totality to an intuitive logic. Unable to found ideological consensus in its actual social relations, to derive the unity of humankind from the anarchy of the market place, the ruling order must ground that consensus instead in the stubborn self-evidence of the gut. We know there is more to social existence than self-interest, because we feel it. What cannot be socially demonstrated has to be taken on faith. The appeal is at once empty and potent: feelings, unlike propositions, cannot be controverted, and if a social order *needs* to be rationally justified, then, one might claim, the Fall has already happened.<sup>55</sup>

Eagleton here states the case for interpreting moral sense theory as complicit in the process of mystifying the essentially violent foundations of civil society. He goes on to argue that the moral sense theorists (Hutcheson, Shaftesbury, and Hume, in particular), in their acknowledgement of the impossibility of rationally grounding the social order and in their turn to what he calls "the aesthetic," also present what can be read as a utopian critique of the rationalist tyranny that underlies Hobbesian or Mandevillian defenses of the modern political and economic order. Finding in "the body" an irreducible and autotelic authority, where the subject is capable of visceral as well as imaginative acts of sympathy and identification, Eagleton suggests that the moral sense theorists are as liberating as they are ideologically troublesome, reaffirming the socio-economic order by associating proper social feeling with the nobility, or, at times in Eagleton, the bourgeoisie. Although there is a certain power to Eagleton's identification of the utopian possibilities inherent in moral sense theory,

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<sup>55</sup> Terry Eagleton *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990. P. 38.

there is also a bleary-eyed wistfulness that is revealed in the under-theorized notion of the “the body” as it pertains to Eagleton’s own project. He remarks that the “disgust we feel at the sight of tyranny or injustice is as previous to all rational calculation as the retching occasioned by some noxious food. The body is anterior to self-interested rationality, and will force its instinctual approbations and aversions upon our social practice.” But what the toilet poetry of at least Swift suggests with an unmistakable urgency is that disgust is very much a function of the times and that literature and literary representation can make the beautiful disgusting and “noxious.”<sup>56</sup> In other words, the aesthetic, for all of its utopian possibilities, unfortunately resolves itself ultimately into historically contingent literary representations (taking literary in its widest sense). To be fair, Eagleton recognizes that placing the aesthetic, or the disinterested as he seems to define it, has its problems insofar as a revolutionary ideology goes, but his caveat is merely that the aesthetic is incapable of attaining “objective force,” presumably because it resists language, is founded on faith, is an alternative to an equally problematic rational grounds for social order, etc. Eagleton calls this “a striking paradox,” but it is really just an extension of his definition of the aesthetic in the first place. If one defines the aesthetic as outside of rational calculation and outside of doctrinal foundations of the state/social order, then it is also true that it cannot be scrutinized and, most importantly, *put into language*, which would have to be the case in order for it to be measured against other possible foundational systems of meaning. The aesthetic may be autotelic, for those utopian longings of the moral sense theorists as well as Eagleton, but that is all it can be as far as language is concerned.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> The reverse of this, making the noxious beautiful is more challenging, but for an eighteenth-century attempt at something along these lines, see Ben Franklin on “discharges of Wind from our Bodies” in *A Letter by Dr. Franklin to the Royal Academy of Brussels in Poetica Exotica* (Esoterika Biblion Society, 1938). Swift, is of course, equally interesting on the topic.

<sup>57</sup> For more on the limits of Eagleton’s theory of the body in *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, see Kathy Alexis Psomiades *Beauty’s Body: Femininity and Representation in British Aestheticism* (Stanford, 1997) 18-

I have spent some time responding to Eagleton's claims for a utopian reading of moral sense theory because it seems to me to simply duplicate the underlying structure that gave rise to moral sense theory in the first place. Eagleton's "aesthetic," Shaftesbury's "virtue" or "natural sociability," and their correlatives in Hutcheson, all seem to emanate from a dissatisfaction with a theory of the social that is grounded on "rationality." That desire is justified, but the turn to an unnamable Other in each of these three cases to solve the dilemmas presented by language itself seems to me to be rather circular in its argumentative form and fundamentally irresolvable. I would argue, however, that Eagleton's identification of the nefarious powers implicit in the moral sense theorists' attempts to recreate sociability by recourse to a code of manners—manners that depend for their efficacy and legitimacy upon "tact or know-how, intuitive good sense or inbred decorum" (Eagleton 41)—is absolutely correct and worth pursuing in a different way than he ultimately does in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. Rather than suggest that the moral sense theorists present a critique of "possessive individualism" and Hobbesian self-interest within their theories of community and society, I would argue that texts such as *Rape of the Lock* reveal that the writings of people such as Shaftesbury were never really intended to be descriptive accounts of how the social order actually functions or how individuals fit into the larger community, but were instead meant to perform in language the codes and logics of sociability they *purport* to describe. The intense anxiety shown in Pope's humorous but still vitriolic attack on the superficiality of the toilet in his poem I would argue

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22. While I heartily agree with Psomiades' general claim that Eagleton fails to explore the notion of the body in his work and that his reliance upon the aesthetic does in some sense duplicate the oppressive logics of those moral sense theorists he critiques, I find the vitriol in her characterization of his argument somewhat perplexing. She comes very close to calling Eagleton a homophobe (that for Eagleton, "Foucault...tries to plug the wrong gap"), which seems unfairly *ad hominem* to me; and, her argument in response to Eagleton's attempt to carve room for affection and emotion in the realm of the political—that Eagleton relies upon a glorified and fictive notion of femininity and "mama"—depends entirely upon her, and not Eagleton's, persistent association of these features of human experience with the feminine. When Eagleton does make reference to the place of the feminine in moral sense theory, his remarks seem to me to be closer to a kind of discursive genealogy, and not part of gendered positivistic moral or political stance. The argument is, in any case, a bracing one.

comes from an awareness of two interdependent phenomena. First, the quasi-magical ability to transform into a social being suggests that sociability is performed, not inherent. At the same time, as it is essential to maintain a distance from this claim in order for the performance to succeed, it is crucial to fold a criticism of performativity into such a defense. In *Rape of the Lock*, that criticism is coded as Belinda herself, the female body, the typical “vanity of women.” Second, the notion that “tact or know-how, intuitive good sense or inbred decorum” can be foundational depends entirely upon one’s willingness to go along with the performance, to suspend the disbelief that must necessarily arise in the face of the final truth that moral sense theory cannot be “grounded otherwise.” It can only begin to found itself once it has already been founded. It is for this reason that Pope begins his description with the *Billet-doux* ambiguity (are we reading the letter’s words, or witnessing Belinda’s assimilation of them?) and that it ends not with a portrait of the bedecked Belinda, but abruptly ends and picks up with Belinda in society. Taking the toilet as a trope of social preparation rather than as a setting, the whole episode thus takes upon a distinctly liminal character, as the position from which Belinda comes even before awaking (she already knows what a *Billet-doux* means and what it entails) and from which we never really see her leave until she is already gone.

This iterative interpretation of moral sense theory, then, is what drives Pope towards a consideration of the destabilizing potential of the toilet—that it stages self-interestedness, but is a necessary staging nonetheless—and what it might mean if the whole world was to thought of as a giant toilet, a scene of perpetual deferral, speculation, preparation, anticipation. Pope attacks the toilet and its votaries in a last-ditch effort to preserve a notion of sociality and sociability that is not founded on looking forward to one’s entrance into society, certainly collapsing traditional distinctions in his jammed description of objects and in his mocking analogy between

ritual transformation and cosmetic adornment. But the fiction of a disinterested social relation, an aesthetic, does not appear in his poem as an alternative; his almost purely negative relation to the toilet and what it signifies leaves the reader unsure of how to proceed. This confusion suggests that the only material difference between social anticipation in the abstract and that represented in the poem is that its practitioner in the poem turns out to be a woman. The female body is thus used—by Pope or the reader, depending on our perspective—to mark the line separating legitimate from illegitimate modes of looking forward. Belinda's error is not that she desires the wrong thing, or that her preparation only masks a deeper ugliness (Swift's position), but that she is a woman. Pope manages to secure an "aesthetic relation" by concentrating on female vanity, while nevertheless putting forward a clear idea of how to achieve social success: through anticipatory gestures of self-fashioning.

*Body Projects: Haywood and Sociability*

In the midst of all of this, it is easy to lose track of the fact that "interestedness" has many faces. The question that presents itself after works such as John Barrell's *An Equal, Wide Survey* (1983), Geoffrey Sill's *The Cure of the Passions and the Origins of the English Novel* (2001), and Scott Paul Gordon's *The Power of the Passive Self in English Literature, 1640-1770* (2002) is what counts as interested behavior, what, that is, gets identified as *interest*.<sup>58</sup> For my purposes, all of these studies have been especially useful in articulating the centrality of interest to a wide range of moral and epistemological problems in the novel, particularly because the idea of interest is so intimately bound up with the idea of anticipation. I argued in the introduction that "interest" should not be separated from its financial origins, and

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<sup>58</sup> John Barrell *English Literature in history, 1730-1780: An Equal, Wide Survey*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983; Geoffrey Sill *The Cure of the Passions and the Origins of the English Novel*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001; Scott Paul Gordon *The Power of the Passive Self in English Literature, 1640-1770*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.



conversely, the figure of the usurer which seems to remain confined primarily to the literature of finance has a much more profound influence on the range of English literature of the eighteenth century than has been acknowledged. But it is essential to remember that the conceptual category of interest contains within it a wide range of discrete types of interest, and while “interest” when identified could be promptly challenged within religious, economic, and political discourses, this identification does not always occur; that is, interest does not always get named as such, for it is often possible to see how, for instance, a character’s interests are not always subject to the same moral imperatives that inflect discussions of interest in other places or with respect to other characters, even within the same text. Eliza Haywood’s amatory fiction is always about interest, and every character, be they morally laudable or conniving, is governed by the interests of the heart. Haywood manages to establish ethical distinctions independent of a reductive rhetoric of disinterestedness by placing emphasis not on desire or interest, but on temporal consciousness, specifically, the type of time-consciousness that gives rise to speculation and projection. What distinguishes Haywood’s attempt to carve room for speculation from Pope’s is that in her novels speculators are both men and women. Speculation’s excesses are marked not by gender, but by time-consciousness. This time-consciousness stands in sharp contrast to her theory of sociability—one quite similar to that of Shaftesbury—which, as Eagleton points out, is firmly rooted in the body. Haywood offers a theory of sociability predicated on the idea that true and proper social behavior comes from a felt connection to others, while the specular and speculative relation to the social world, including that exemplified by the toilet, effectively robs the body of the ability to feel.

Thanks in part to scholars such as Todd who have directed our attention towards the scores of women writers in the eighteenth century who have suffered from

long neglect in spite of their popularity when their works were initially published, novelists such as Eliza Haywood have received much needed critical attention in the past two decades. Scholarly interest has buoyed the academic presses, allowing for the republication of numerous works by her, some of which have been out of print since the eighteenth century. Thus far, this scholarship has approached Haywood primarily in terms of her relation to the predominantly masculine public printing culture, to a tradition of women's writing, and to the generic history of the novel. While the intentions of scholars pursuing such strategies of location and redefinition are clearly genuine and their efforts invaluable, given the now widely acknowledged centrality of Haywood's work in particular to the broad range of eighteenth-century social, economic, political, and "domestic" issues, it is worth considering how her writing, independent of its status as "women's writing," offers unique insights into how novelists generally might have understood and reformulated the problems of the future which I have outlined thus far. While the question of gender plays an essential role in Haywood's solution to the dilemma of practical economic distinction, it is not my intention here to tease out the implications of this solution in terms of Haywood's status as a woman writer, although this reading may be preparative to such an attempt.

As the title of Haywood's most popular novel suggests from the outset, *Love in Excess* is fundamentally an attempt to formulate a difference, between love *and* excess.<sup>59</sup> The distinction is ambiguous, however, as the title is vague on whether the story is about "love" in "excesses of love" or about "love" and that which is anathema to love, namely, "love in excess." So from the very beginning, the reader is offered, on the one hand, the notion that love and excess are on an ethical continuum where the difference lies in particular and localized instances of moderating behaviors ("If you

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<sup>59</sup> All references are to the recent Broadview Edition. *Love in Excess: or, The Fatal Enquiry*. Edited by David Oakleaf. Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press, 2000.

love too much, then you love in excess”). On the other hand, the title proposes that one either lives a life of love, or a life of excessive love, and the ethical distinction between the two is absolute (“If you love in excess, then you do not love”; the distinction between love and lust, etc.). This latter possibility is not to suggest that one cannot change his or her ways, but that to turn from love to excess is to turn from the good to the bad, from virtue to vice, whereas the first merely means curtailing or expanding the intensity of one’s love. The subtitle, “The Fatal Enquiry,” further complicates this question as given the absence of a pivotal “enquiry” to which this title might refer in the plot of the novel, it is possible that this “enquiry” is that made by the reader. He or she will read of fatalities arising from love owing to one’s curiosity. If this is the case, then the reader is put into a more direct relation with the characters themselves, for the characters guilty of love in excess share something in common with the fatal curiosities of the novel reader.

The title further suggests that at some level, the experience of the heart is an economic matter, if not a financial one. Love and excess have to do with accumulation, with hoarding or with spending too freely, with giving and taking, growth and retrenchment. The question posed by the title is on one reading whether love allows us to escape economics; and, on the other, whether love offers a model for proper conduct within more overtly pecuniary realms. To return for a moment to the narrative of usury that began this dissertation, it is important to recall that the question of what defined excess in the world of money lending became central to the financial debates of the seventeenth century once it became clear that lending itself was not only permissible within the Christian ethical framework, but a necessity for the conduct of healthy trade and commerce. The clarification of excess proved to be a more enduring rhetorical path for bankers and merchants than the defense of lending for interest partly because it put a finer moral point on an increasingly troublesome

financial matter, and partly because its circumstantial malleability deflected attention from more threatening moral and religious questions associated with accumulation. The ambiguity built into the category of excess thus allowed it to function simultaneously as a foil for the issuing of more modest forms of interest bearing loans, and as a distraction from the perhaps more crucial question of whether a credit economy was the morally right type of economic order.

The problem of ethical distinction and moderation certainly participates in a larger cultural tendency to establish middle paths in a wide variety of areas. Writers asked questions like what was the proper amount of mourning after the death of a loved one? what constituted moderate as opposed to enthusiastic religious piety? how could one avoid becoming immoderately fond of wine while still partaking of it? Sir John Denham's famous lines emphasizing the beauty of balance—"Though deep yet clear, though gentle yet not dull, / Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full"—are but one of many attempts to figure the ideal balance between extremes, for the establishment of middle paths seems to have been a ubiquitous cultural concern. Haywood's novel foregrounds the problem of excess and moderation, and in doing so attempts to establish the legitimate foundations of companionship. It is a unique feature of the novel, however, that any such attempt cannot exist outside of history, in a purely speculative realm of universals and arguments. Perhaps because Haywood's novel seems to engage with eternal problems of the heart, it was and still is labeled a romance, but it quite consciously situates itself just after the War of Spanish Succession (1713), at precisely a moment when it was possible to envision the collision of an antiquated code of ethical responsibility and the emerging realities of a modern credit economy. Haywood's choice of this particular historical setting was perhaps determined in part by the historical events transpiring during the time of her composition of the novel. She began the work during the period of intense speculative

euphoria immediately preceding the collapse of the South Sea Bubble. In fact, part three of the novel (integrated into modern editions as the second half of part two) was quite possibly composed during the actual collapse, for parts one and two appeared first in 1719 and part three in 1720, just after the official collapse. This ostensibly “romantic” novel in being composed and received against the backdrop of such a momentous challenge to the notion that financial speculation was an essential and productive part of the new financial order clearly responds to and reformulates the ethical problems of speculation, scheming, deceit, manipulation, credit, and artifice. While all of these are certainly present at some level in the romances from which Haywood (not to mention Defoe) drew inspiration, they take on an added historical and ideological significance given that the readers of Haywood’s novel had witnessed—and, indeed, were witnessing—first-hand how these quintessentially “romantic” problems could produce disastrous consequences within the world of finance. If the Spectator’s astonished hypostatization of Lady Credit and his equally awestruck reaction to the Bank of England implied that what had been developing behind closed doors amongst a relatively small if not exactly discrete cadre of financiers and policy makers was available to the *inquisitive* citizen in 1711, the South Sea Bubble guaranteed that matters of finance were now necessarily public matters as well. While an allegorical reading of *Love in Excess* is difficult considering the paucity of information we have on Haywood’s composition, the archetypal figures and dilemmas of romance should be situated against their related manifestations in the world of financial speculation, manipulation, and deceit. As Silke Strathman has written:

[L]iterature may help a society to come to terms, emotionally and morally, with the unprecedented and the unknown. Eighteenth-century literature, by translating an economic and social earthquake into fictions and semi-fictions, into the familiar genres and metaphorical patterns, rendered it morally

meaningful and emotionally plausible. In other words, it offered various “myths” to explain the [South Sea] Bubble; it mythicized the event. (5)<sup>60</sup>

Strathman’s account of the South Sea Bubble deals primarily with literature whose explicit concern was the world of finance. I would submit that what was equally important with respect to this “mythicizing” tendency of eighteenth-century literature was literature—in this case, the romance—that used the salient tropes and conventions without explicit reference to the Bubble but that nevertheless spoke to related cultural anxieties.

Haywood figures a related transition into the plot of the novel with her first two sentences:

In the late war between the French and the confederate armes, there were two brothers, who had acquired a more than ordinary reputation under the command of the great and intrepid Luxembourg. But the conclusion of the peace taking away any further occasions of shewing their valour, the eldest of ‘em, whose name was Count D’elmont, returned to Paris, from whence he had been absent two years, leaving his brother at St. Omer’s, ‘till the cure of some slight wounds were perfected. (37)

Haywood proceeds to tell us that in lieu of battle, the Count finds himself engaged with the ladies of the French court. It is in the battle of the sexes that D’elmont finds himself when his military puissance is no longer needed, and it is this revised disposition that allows him to be both the hero of the novel as well as a Frenchman. Haywood uses the potent amorous connotations of French courtly romance to re-imagine the position of the English subject caught in a shift from an aristocratic to a mercantile code of ethics. Haywood suggests that in D’elmont’s moment—much like that of the traditional landed aristocracy in England—outside of war there are few if any “further occasions of shewing their valour.” The vacuum created by this loss could be supplied by the dynamics of love, or the dynamics of commerce and trade.

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<sup>60</sup> Silke Stratmann “*South Sea’s at best a mighty Bubble*”: *The literization of a national trauma*, Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1993.

Whatever reason Haywood had for choosing the former and thereby requiring a French cast of characters of her, it is quite possible to see in the amorous plot of *Love in Excess* a vivid outline of a subtext concerning finance and excess.

The novel is structured as a series of interwoven narratives of amorous desire, all of which in one way or another relate to the affairs of D'elmont, who is described at the novel's outset as "having never experienced the force of love" (39). Throughout the novel, love is a force that exists primarily outside of the characters, moving them as a god might move his subjects below. Haywood in fact frequently invokes the figure of Cupid, or the god of love, to suggest that the novel's many intrigues are governed by something outside of the characters themselves. This occasional metaphorical invocation is of more than accidental importance, for it allows Haywood to exploit the distinction between the active and the passive lover. Within this framework it is possible to see how the passive lover, moved as he or she is by a force more powerful than that of self-interest, possesses a superior moral character to the active lover who seeks gain and will stop at nothing to attain the object of desire. Scott Paul Gordon has recently offered a highly insightful thesis that explains the centrality of what he calls the "passivity trope" in eighteenth-century English literature. He shows how a seventeenth-century notion of grace is incorporated in many ways into the literature of the eighteenth-century, allowing for a passively moved subject to attain a certain moral superiority over those subjects who actively choose to do things. This thesis runs counter to a tradition of literary and intellectual history that sees the eighteenth-century political subject as primarily defined by his integration, autonomy, and freedom of choice. On the contrary, much literature of the period, Gordon argues, "construes all deliberate action as self-interested" (48). Gordon's argument depends primarily upon seventeenth-century conceptions of grace and salvation and the theological literature which put forward the idea that the individual is subservient to

the power of the Deity, and in many respects, the narrative I wish to tell concerning the importance of the notion of providential guarantee in the usury debates of the seventeenth century parallels the concept of grace in his study. Haywood's decision to invoke the god of love to vindicate the desires of her heroes and heroines thus fits snugly into a tradition that imagines "deliberate action as self-interested."

The potency of Gordon's claim, however, rests largely upon the idea that "the alternative to being 'acted by another,' to invoking the passivity trope, that is, is to perform a self-determined, self-sufficient, and thus inevitably self-interested action" (49). It is the starkness of this vision that gives his thesis merit and what limits it ultimately as a formula for the understanding of developments in the novel. For it is obviously the case that characters, be they heroes or villains, must "deliberately act" in the pages of a text. Linguistic necessity aside for a moment, characters cannot be described or rendered exclusively in terms of what is done *to them*, because at some level what is done to them must prompt a certain amount of action. This is one thing that distinguishes Haywood's "romance" from, say, Sidney's *Arcadia*. In the latter text, Sidney's characters almost never act without the immediate prompting of some entity, enemy, abstract entity (Remembrance, Devotion, Love, etc.), inanimate object, or controlling Deity. *Love in Excess* provides a particularly interesting challenge to this bold opposition. It is the contention of this essay that Haywood's novel establishes ethical differences not according to whether an agent is active or passive, for all agents are active and passive at different moments, but according to the extent of forward-looking speculation involved in the decision making process. It is not simply a matter of acting in a self-interested—as opposed to disinterested—fashion that governs the ethical logic of Haywood's novel, but whether that self-interest is grounded in strategies for future gain or in strategies for the attainment of immediate needs and desires, the former being morally suspect, the latter being the trait of a proper hero.



I will return to Gordon's thesis a number of times in this essay, because for me it clearly defines a position with respect to the question of interest (in both an economic and aesthetic sense) that informs many discussions about eighteenth-century literature. To briefly illustrate the limitations of a strict active/passive binary when it comes to the discussion of the eighteenth-century novel, one need only consider the heroine most frequently caught up in this binary: Richardson's Pamela. Fielding's Shamelization of Richardson's quintessentially passive heroine involved demonstrating that Pamela could be rewritten to expose just how active she was in securing her ultimate fortune. As successful as his attempt was, it was perhaps superseded at least in the complexity of its vision by Haywood's own *Anti-Pamela* (1741), a novel much like Fielding's in its insistence upon the active nature of Pamela but almost entirely unread today. Haywood lays stress on Pamela's "irrepressible sexual desire," but it is problematic to assert, as at least one critic has, that this model of activity runs counter to "Richardson's ideal" of a "sexless heroine who triumphs over adversity through a passive display of her moral virtue."<sup>61</sup> There are ways of thinking through the Pamela problem without recourse to the strict binaries of activity and passivity or sexual desire and moral virtue. Already in Richardson's novel, her relation to her own dress, her carefully crafted letters, and even her determined piety at some level are the results of choices she makes, all of which are as "active" and deliberate as any that Mr. B. makes. As Northrop Frye put it, "the energy and resourcefulness with which she gets Mr. B on the bottom line of a marriage contract is by no means free of ruthlessness."<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, the activity/passivity binary that Richardson clearly did not imagine to be at the center of his novel quickly became the grounds upon which it could be critiqued and mocked. In many respects, Richardson

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<sup>61</sup> Deborah J. Nestor "Virtue Rarely Rewarded: Ideological Subversion and Narrative Form in Haywood's Later Fiction" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol 34, No. 3 Restoration and Eighteenth Century (Summer, 1994), 579-598. P. 580.

<sup>62</sup> Northrop Frye "Varieties of Eighteenth-Century Sensibility" *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter, 1990-1991), 157-172. P. 164.

writes Shamela into the original text of *Pamela*, but figures deliberate action as *acceptable* if its end involves a larger moral purpose. So the question of whether *Pamela* was passively moved or supremely manipulative was for Richardson quite irrelevant to the moral structure of his novel. It is time that we consider eschewing the rhetoric of activity and passivity—at least in its simplest sense—if for no other reason than the fact that such an emphasis occludes the fact that the novel cannot exist without deliberate actions on the part of its characters. As far as *Love in Excess* goes, a rhetoric more suitable for formulating its central moral and ideological positions with respect to affairs of both the heart and the pocketbook is one that turns on the question of anticipation and immediacy. It is ultimately the speculative disposition—understood as that forward-looking and predictive sense that was absolutely requisite for modern economic success—that determines the fates, and consequently the morality of Haywood’s novel.

At a first glance, *Love in Excess*, as I have mentioned, fits snugly into a tradition of valorizing passivity, often because of its explicit flirtation with the animating powers and determining authority of the god of love, if not the Christian God of seventeenth-century theology. At the novel’s outset, after we learn that D’elmont has left his brother at St. Omer’s, we are told that the “fame of the Count’s brave actions arrived before him, and he had the satisfaction of being received by the King and Court, after a manner that might gratifie the ambition of the proudest” (37). This temporal disjunction between the speed of the news and the speed of the Count allows him to exist independently of the rewards and punishments that are conferred by society, specifically, the court. He essentially lives in the past of his fame, enjoying its benefits without the sordid responsibility of ensuring that he receives his due. Haywood’s passive construction in this case (“being received by the King and Court”) notwithstanding, we cannot allow this passive status as it relates to fame to obscure the

more simple fact that he *chooses* to leave his brother behind, to set out for the seat of fashionable society, Paris, and that he is described as “brave” and having shown “valour,” traits that require the reader to imagine him as heroically and indeed deliberately “active,” at least in war. D’elmont is not to be understood as exhibiting that “passive Valour” that Aphra Behn had ascribed to the stoical and self-sacrificing Indians of the New World in *Oroonoko*, but rather that kind of heroic activism that means charging into battle and seizing the day. To argue that Haywood exclusively privileges passivity over activity is to miss the deep ambivalence in D’elmont’s character, even if his status as an active being is “told” as opposed to “shown.” This heroic activism is shown, however, in the scenes in which D’elmont rescues Frankville and later embarks on a quest to rescue Melliora from the Baron D’Espernay. I will return shortly to D’elmont, but the point that must be made is that D’elmont’s fate is not ultimately determined by his status as an “active” player, which troubles the notion that the text is ideologically unequivocal about the virtues inherent in passivity.

Conversely, his first amorous intrigue results from the actions of Alovisa, a lustful woman who determines to win the bulk of D’elmont’s affections, even if it requires systematically manipulating the entire social world in which she and he move. Given this status, we would expect to find a singularly active woman, unmoved by anything other than her own perverse will. And yet in the case of Alovisa, she is frequently tormented by that which is not, strictly speaking, her own will:

But the impatient Alovisa disdaining to be ranked with those, whom her vanity made her consider as infinitely her inferiors, suffered her self to be agitated almost to madness between the two extreams of love and indignation; a thousand *chimeras* came into her head, and sometimes prompted her to discover the sentiments she had in his favour. But these resolutions were rejected, almost as soon as formed, and she could not fix on any for a long time; ‘till at last, love (ingenious in invention,) inspired her with one, which probably might let her into the secrets of his heart, without the shame of revealing her own. (38)

What is important here is not that the passage describes a vain and lovelorn heiress tormented by her psyche as the fact that Haywood goes to great pains to figure her torments as autonomous from Alovisa. Chimeras “came into her head,” “and sometimes prompted her;” Haywood’s use of the construction “suffered herself” suggests that even if these things are all “in her head” they are also at odds with a will that knows better; and we are told that love inspires her to engage in a project or invention that “probably” will succeed. The conflict between Love and the Will suggested in this passage offers interesting way of thinking about the relation between agency and determination in the romance. Defoe had written, and he was merely writing what was considered proverbial wisdom, that “necessity” is “allowed to be the mother of invention” in his *Essay Upon Projects*. Haywood is clearly echoing this view, for love, like necessity, is beyond ignoring or refusing and in these states of desperation and powerlessness, one is required to perform an act of invention, discovery, or creation. Love gives rise to projects, just as necessity itself did for Defoe; similarly, D’elmont’s brother, the Chevalier Brillian remarks after meeting Ansellina that “[f]ears, hopes, anxieties, jealous pains, uneasie pleasures, all the artillery of love, were garrisoned in my heart, and a thousand various half formed resolutions filled my head” (70); and, later in the text, Frankville relates that Love suggested a “thousand various inventions” to him when he was trying to win Camilla (195). What Alovisa does next—compose an anonymous billet for the Count—confirms this connection, particularly given that the billet-doux is in some senses the foundational text for a modern civilization defined by its insistence upon preparations for future sociability. It is the remote object that promises narrative fulfillment—if not the character’s—by way its potential to be miscarried or misconstrued. The billet, like the literary project more generally, satisfies in the present because of the risks that are involved in the future. Failure is a constitutive aspect of the project (it might

“probably” succeed), insofar as what is guaranteed success participates in the realm of the already known, the past, the given, the certain. Alovisa is drawn into this risk not by herself, but by fantasies, chimeras, that Haywood must necessarily represent as independent of her will. It is a project, effected by an liminal entity, acting with the force of necessity, that positions the characters for a plot. At the same time, we cannot say that Alovisa is innocent, for this passivity vis-à-vis those chimeras or Love, regardless of their persistence, uncontrollability, or autonomy are presumably chimeras of her own diseased imagination. By this point in the novel it is already quite clear who the morally superior being is, but the language of the text ensures us that our evaluation does not boil down to a binary between activity and passivity, whatever that binary’s centrality to larger religious and ethical systems of the eighteenth century might be.

So we have, on the one hand, a morally superior Count who is active in a quasi-heroic sense, and, on the other, a morally suspect heiress who seems ruled by passions to which she cannot but submit. How is it that Haywood can so quickly establish the ethical system of her novel without recourse to the terms of a passive/active binary that either implicates or excuses the responsibilities of the characters for their actions and reception? The answer lies partly in what has already been said of Pope’s *Belinda*, that her entrance into the social world is successfully anticipated in her ritualistic transformation at the toilette. We are told in these first pages that Alovisa is troubled not just by the Count’s disregard for her, but by an apparent deception perpetrated by the world at large:

“What,” said she, “have I beheld without concern a thousand lovers at my feet, and shall the only man I ever endeavoured or wished to charm, regard me with indifference? Wherefore has the agreeing world joyned with my deceitful glass to flatter me into a vain belief I had invincible attractions?” (39)

It is here that we see how the specular-as-reflection links up with speculation understood as forward-looking practice. The world and her mirror are represented as co-conspirators in a plot to implant the seeds of vanity in what would otherwise be an unselfconscious, unreflective, and indeed, innocent female body. The reflexivity offered by Alovisa's mirror and the world that corroborates its "opinions" is juxtaposed with both Alovisa's rival in love at this point in the novel, Amena, who "was little versed in the art of dissimulation, so necessary to her sex," as well as D'elmont, who is defined by his "natural complaisance" (46, 38). Amena's name conjures images of pastoral innocence (*locus amoenes*); and, D'elmont's "natural complaisance" is akin to Shaftesbury's "natural sociability," a trait which becomes increasingly compromised as D'elmont embroils himself deeper into affairs of the heart with Alovisa, Amena, Violetta, Melliora, and thereby becomes acquainted with the machinations of the projecting world of love. That said, D'elmont does manage to remain comparatively innocent and virtuous owing to his inability or unwillingness to engage in the same kind of specular/speculative relation to his future that marks Alovisa as disingenuous and calculatedly social. D'elmont is capable of remaining strangely aloof from the sordid milieus in which Alovisa constantly finds herself primarily because the absence of a specular mode of engagement with the world prevents him from embarking upon any projects unless they are geared towards immediate bodily pleasure for both himself and his partner. D'elmont can always be moved by the requirements his libido places upon him because sexual intercourse is focused on the body and the body of the Other.

Moreover, sex that is oriented only towards the pleasure of one partner in Haywood's fiction is either rape or, as I will shortly argue, speculation. A similar antipathy for speculative projection, sexual or otherwise, can be attributed to D'elmont's equally complaisant and virtuous paramour, Melliora, who tells us that

after she has been captured by the Lovelace-esque Marquess D'Sanguillier she and her servant Charlotta spent their private time projecting:

All the times we had any opportunity of talking to each other, we spent in forming schemes for my escape, but none of them appeared feasible; however the very contrivance was a kind of pleasure to me, for tho' I began to banish all my fears of the Marquess's offering any violence to my virtue, yet I found his passion would not permit him to suffer my departure...In this fashion my dearest D'elmont [her interlocutor] have I lived, sometimes flattering myself with vain projects, sometimes desponding of ever being free. (257)

Melliora tries to formulate projects or schemes with her equally faithful and virtuous servant Charlotta, but neither of them seems to be very good at it, which is a mark of this virtue. Moreover, unlike Alovisa or, later, Ciamara, the project is not prompted by any liminal torments (love, chimeras, etc.), but the very will of Melliora who revels not in the prospect of success, but in the very immediate pleasures conferred by the act of projecting: "the very contrivance was a kind of pleasure to me." Although projecting, Melliora remains tied to her present circumstances, and unmoved by anything but her own will in her efforts to scheme, she does not suffer from the schizophrenic divide between intention and projection that defines a character like Alovisa. The mediating influence of chimeras in the case of latter contrasts sharply with Melliora's knowledge that her project, and not herself, is what is vain.

It is useful to compare Melliora's inability to project and her full knowledge of the futility of scheming with the character of Ciamara. In her [Ciamara's] letter to D'elmont following her declaration of love to him and his rebuff of it, she writes "As I was sitting in my closet, watching the progress of the lazy hours, which flew not half so swift as my desires to bring on the appointed time in which you promised to be with me in the garden; my woman came running in, to acquaint me, that you were in the house, and waited to speak with Camilla" (216-7). Her speculative tendency is manifest in a simultaneous awareness of the progress of time and the fruitless demands that her desire places on its passage. Melliora's sense of time, however, is not

chronological, but personal and relational: “All the times we had any opportunity of talking to each other...” In her postscript to the letter to D’elmont, Ciamara ascribes her actions to an alleged subordinacy to D’elmont, stating that “like a god, you [D’elmont] rule my very will,” but what we know is that if he does rule her will, she has nevertheless prepared herself for this domination by fixating on clock-time. Ciamara’s attention to the passage of the hours when the Count arrives allows this dramatic accident to be integrated into the progress of the novel more organically than it might otherwise have been, for “however accidental the appearance of a character may be in pragmatic and psychological terms, it emerges from an existent, experienced continuity, and the atmosphere of thus being borne upon the unique and unrepeatable stream of life cancels out the accidental nature of their experiences and the isolated nature of the events recounted.”<sup>63</sup> In this way, we see how Haywood’s novel, in addition to staging a collision of aristocratic and mercantile ideologies also offers the reader a collision of earlier generic forms and the novel.<sup>64</sup> Just as Alovisa’s temporal savviness gives rise to billets whose passage from hand to hand is as much a time unit as a “lazy hour,” so does Ciamara’s preoccupation with the unstoppable and ineluctable flow of time signify her status as a character not of the romance, or the epic, but of the novel. Alovisa’s scheme initiates and sustains the plot in the first half of the novel, while Ciamara’s time-consciousness prepares her for a project that will further propel the storyline. Haywood achieves in this fusion of accident and time an organic connection between temporal character of modern experience (clock-time) and

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<sup>63</sup> György Lukács *Theory of the Novel*. Translated by Anne Bostock. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971. P. 125.

<sup>64</sup> The distinction presented here is from Lukács’ “The Romanticism of Disillusionment” in *Theory of the Novel*. Although Lukács names the epic as the genre defined by the absence of time and the life-immanence of meaning, it is quite possible to see a similar distinction between the romance and the novel, perhaps because of the romance’s own indebtedness to the epic. The major temporal distinction between the epic and the romance, Bakhtin has argued, lies in the distinction between chronotopes, which I won’t digest here. Nevertheless, Bakhtin’s distinction still leaves room for the idea that there is a sharp distinction between the fullness of life independent of the unifying effects of homogeneous time (Walter Benjamin “Theses on the Philosophy of History”) offered by the romance and the temporal consciousness of truly novelistic characters such as Ciamara or Alovisa.



the accidental revolutions and convolutions that define the chronotope of the romance and also open up the romance to the possibility that it might never end (relational and personal time outside of clock-time). This particular fusion of generic forms is also further evidence that Haywood's "romance" works are uniquely important to the development of the novel, as border-texts between genres that offer new ways of integrating traditional patterns into modern epistemological and ethical contexts.

Her meeting with D'elmont and the subsequent letter to him that I have been discussing results from D'elmont's attempt to make contact with Camilla on behalf of his friend, Frankville. Owing to some confusion, D'elmont has ended up in the wrong place at the wrong time, and when he declares his desire to speak with Camilla to Ciamara's servant, who promptly informs her mistress that he is there to see Camilla instead of her, Ciamara mistakenly assumes that D'elmont has affections for her [Camilla]. This leads her to embark on a project of dissimulation in order to win the Count's affections. She enters the drawing room where D'elmont sits (not knowing what Camilla looks like), bedecked beyond anything even Pope might have imagined, and pretends to be Camilla:

D'elmont...[who was in a deep musing was] roused from it by the dazzling owner of this sumptuous apartment; nothing could be more glorious than her appearance; she was by nature, a woman of a most excellent shape, to which, her desire of pleasing, had made her add all the aids of art; she was drest in a gold and silver stuff petticoat, and a waistcoat of plain blue sattin, set round the neck and sleeves, and down the seams with diamonds, and fastend on the breast, with jewels of a prodigious largeness and lustre; a girdles of the same encompassed her waste; her hair, of which she had great quantity, was black as jet, and with a studied negligence, fell part of it on her neck in careless ringlets, and the other was turned up, and fastend here and there with bodkins, which had pendant diamonds hanging to 'em, and as she moved, glittered with a quivering blaze, like stars darting their fires from out a sable sky; she had a veil on, but so thin, that it did not, in the least, obscure the shine of her garments; or her jewels, only she had contrive to double that part of it which hung over her face, in so many folds, that it served to conceal her as well as a *vizard* mask. (209)

I quote this passage in its entirety because it exemplifies the larger normative system of Haywood's novel. The figure being described has embarked on this mission of bedazzlement owing to a fortunate opportunity that has accidentally presented itself to her while she was focused on the coming hours. The presentation of the self is Ciamara's project, and judging both from D'elmont's response as well as Haywood's own apparent glee in composing such a thorough and majestic portrait, it succeeds in dazzling the intended viewer (D'elmont and the reader). We know from Haywood's immediately preceding description of the setting that the apartment in which D'elmont sits when this "glorious appearance" emerges is replete with large mirrors, which figures her entire world as somehow like a toilette. The specular and speculative converge in the figure of Ciamara, but this is not all that is revealed in this scene. Like her own caveat concerning D'elmont's god-like determining powers from the letter's postscript that somehow excuses her excesses, the veil that covers her resplendent wardrobe, hair, and face is a double-sign. It suggests a certain unwillingness to reveal the body/project while simultaneously highlighting precisely its magnificence. This sumptuary mask is also a frame for the body, marking it as worth seeing because it manages to shine through. This dynamic is similar to that concerning her hair, its studied negligence being a common topos in both poetry and prose of the period. The "deep musing" in which D'elmont finds himself when Ciamara enters the room so dressed involves a fantasy of being in "a cottage blest with" Melliora, the true object of his affections. The artless simplicity of a humble abode adorned only with his Melliora—and certainly without any mirrors—would be preferable to Ciamara's opulent residence because such a place is outside of the realm of fashionable society that Ciamara clearly dotes upon and towards which all of her designs look.

Ciamara's duplicity in this scene is followed by the Count's repulse of her advances. She claims to be Camilla, who she is not, hoping to win the Count's

affections. Her words are all geared towards ensnaring the Count, and as such mirror her own body. Her lies, moreover, become entangled with her physiognomy after she declares her adoration for him:

...[In] saying this, she turned her head a little on one side, and put her handkerchief before her face, affecting to seem confused at what she spoke; but the Count redned in good earnest, and with a countenance which expressed sentiments, far different from those she endeavoured to inspire. (210)

Haywood then presents D'elmont clearly stating his distaste for this advance, and in doing so aligns the Count's words with bodily motions that are always "in good earnest." Haywood frequently distinguishes signs of love in her novels by describing legitimate ones as "real" or "in good earnest" or "uncalled for" (not as in "inappropriate," but rather "not actively sought out"). This opposition between the duplicitous word and the sincere word emerges from a theory of language that juxtaposes the forward-looking word with the immediate and bodily word. Language that points towards the future, in other words, language that has a studied purpose, is indissociable from the body that cannot feel "properly." D'elmont, however, finds himself immediately blushing, and his language derives its authenticity from this physiological responsiveness. None of this is to say that characters such as Ciamara or Alovisa do not feel pain or express themselves through their bodies, quite the contrary. Soon after the Count declares his affections for another woman, Ciamara, still masquerading as Camilla, weeps tears of "love or anger" and then "instead of making any direct reply to what he said, she raged, stamped, tore her hair, cursed...all mankind, the world, and in that height of fury, scarce spared heaven itself; but the violence of her pride and resentment being a little vented, love took his turn, again she wept, again she prest his hand, nay she even knelt, and hung upon his feet, as he would have broke from her, and begged him with words as eloquent as wit could form, and desperate dying love suggest, to pity and relieve her misery" (211). How is this

compatible with what I have been suggesting about the value-system of Haywood's novel, and the somatic authenticity theory of language that marks D'elmont's remarks as opposed to those of Ciamara? It is needless to state that Ciamara clearly *does* mean what she is saying here, that her words are authentic insofar as they justly represent her state of mind and body. But what distinguishes her language here from that of the Count is that it is generated out of an excessive passion whose end can only be the breakdown of sociability. It isn't surprising after this outburst that the Count promptly leaves Ciamara to herself. What becomes apparent is that the Count's susceptibility to his body in scenes such as this one translates into a productive social disposition by way of seamlessly generating polite language, while Ciamara's susceptibility to her body's feelings culminates in incoherent language and decidedly impolite behavior. The Count is seen to be in control of his body even as his body is in control of him, constantly striking a balance that rests upon the idea of sociability. Ciamara's "control" of her body, registered through her self-adornment, is balanced against her body's needs only to the extent that it is excluded entirely: it dazzles but does not itself feel. While the Count lets his body control him at all times, producing language and forcing him to, for example, leave the room, Ciamara forcibly fashions her body in the interest of future successes only to find it returning with a vengeance in the scene just described, not as a haunting reality but as an explosive force. This set of scenes dramatizes Haywood's position concerning sociability. In order for one to live in society, one must live according to the felt aesthetic realities of the present moment, not the future contingencies associated with self-presentation. The narrator remarks: "if [love and ambition] are failings, they are such as plead their own excuse, and can never want forgiveness from a generous heart, *provided no indirect courses are taken to procure the ends of the former, nor inconstancy, or ingratitude, stain the beauty of the latter*" (emphasis mine, 186). As far as love goes, indirect courses are almost

always figured as projects, designs, or schemes, and frequently employ the *billet-doux* as a means to the accomplishment of these ends. In this respect, the indirection of the *billet-doux*, its potential for miscarriage or misinterpretation, is the dominant trope for anti-social behavior. This stands in sharp contrast to Pope's depiction of the *billet-doux* as social albeit associated with female vanity, fickleness, or inconstancy.

In this world of fashion, reflection, design and ornament, Haywood situates her narrative, but the utopian longings of D'elmont—his desire to be in a “cottage” with *Melliora*—in the scene just described demand that some space be carved for virtue within it. In other words, Haywood takes lords and ladies, counts and countesses, soldiers and noblemen, heirs and heiresses and puts forward rather conventional views of artifice, design, sexuality, love, and desire. But in order for the promulgation of these views to be articulated, let alone believed, it requires that there be some way for the world of fashion and society (or perhaps there is only fashionable society in her novel) to accommodate the virtuous such that they receive their earned rewards. Again, while the active/passive distinction begins to explain this, it does not account for the full range of behaviors in the novel. Specifically, Haywood, like many other writers of her generation, were particularly concerned not with interest in the abstract, but with how forward-looking practices might be limited or moderated without completely sacrificing the importance of individual desire and self-interest. Haywood's own solution to the problem of how to accommodate self-interest with conventional morality involves negating the significance of chronological time, clock-time, the kind of time that Lukács had called the central structuring principle of the novel, not through a rejection of this new sense of time, but by a fusion of the romantic figure of Fortune with accident. The accidental allows Haywood to envision a connection between the world of romance and the world of the novel. Of the most pressing instances of this connection between the romance and the novel, between

morality and speculation, are those moments in the story where the libidinal puissance of D'elmont comes into conflict with the ethical frame that Haywood depends upon. D'elmont must be both virtuous and sexually active, but because the novel begins with D'elmont in a state of relative innocence, he must gradually come to learn the dynamics of the highly sexualized universe in which he travels. Just as Tom Jones, in a way, requires the affair with Molly Seagrim to prepare himself for marriage with Sophia, so must D'elmont have a number of lesser affairs to ready himself for his marriage to Melliora. The problem for Haywood, who at this time at least seems to have had a rather stark view of female virtue, was how to "prepare" D'elmont for his sexual and marital climax, without making him so rakish as to lose the reader's moral sympathy. In effect, Haywood must imagine a way of fusing the romantic ideal of military/sexual puissance with the projecting necessities of both modernity and the novel within the context of an absolutist morality of female virtue. Her solution to this is to allow D'elmont the full range of projecting capabilities so long as they are geared towards his sexual awakening and, as importantly, so long as they never succeed. Consequently, his sexual escapades, which are always little projects of one kind or another, are constantly interrupted not by some moral realization on his part, but by the contingent world in which those projects occur (53, 58, 118, 139, 225, 258: all present scenes in which sex is interrupted for the preservation of a character's virtue).

On numerous occasions throughout the novel, D'elmont is interrupted in his attempts to take a single woman's virtue by the intrusion of some unforeseen person or event. This is true before his marriage to Alovisa, in the case of Amena as well as her servant Anaret; and then during his marriage with Melliora. D'elmont's susceptibility to accidental interruptions is not limited to the realm of love, for it is in the dark home of the Baron that Alovisa accidentally impales herself on his drawn rapier. It is ironic that D'elmont so frequently finds himself accidentally impeded from the act of

penetration and eventually finds himself accidentally penetrating the wife whose presence has become detestable to him. He also is seen, just prior to this fortunate tragedy, accidentally consummating his sexual desires not with Melliora whom he believes to be the young woman in his bed, but with the Baron's younger sister, Melantha. Because D'elmont so frequently fails to take the last "proof" of these various women's virtue, and because we led to believe that Melantha is a sexually liberated coquet, these accidents paradoxically serve to bolster D'elmont's status as a potent sexual energy in the text. Those characters who seem to be the most sexually inclined in fact compromise their gender identities. Melantha's sexual appetitiveness intimates a certain masculinity, while the Baron's conniving efforts at seducing/bribing Alovisa into bed makes him ultimately seem less of a man than the more virtuous heroic male presences in the novel who need to do little more than flash their gleaming eyes and complaisant smiles to win the affections of the novel's female characters. The upshot of this reversal, where expressive/lustful sexuality culminates not in the affirmation of "traditional gender roles" but its negation, is that the accidental interruptions of sexuality seem to play a significant ideological role in terms of the politics and ethics of determination, projection and speculation. Characters such as Alovisa and the Baron D'espernay who calculatedly plot to realize their sexual needs and desires end up losing the very gender identity that we are to imagine gave rise to the desires that set those projects in motion in the first place. D'elmont—as well as the Chevalier Brilliant and Frankville the younger, who are different from D'elmont only in the way that the members of legendary romance heroic teams such as Orestes and Pilades, Theseus and Perithous, or Pyrocles and Musidorus are different—is defined rather by an impulsive, immediate, and (therefore) innocent sexual disposition; and, when he begins to understand that projection may be used in the service of sexual desire, Haywood rescues him from any truly unethical

action by rendering his efforts fruitless. These accidents help to sustain his masculinity not by representing conquest, sexual or otherwise, but by withholding satisfaction. He is thus in a state of constant sexual awareness and desire rather than satiety; and even after he does have intercourse with Melantha, it is possible to read into his character a shamefaced guilt traditionally associated with the hiring of prostitutes. So, even when he does have sex, because it is not animated by the same natural love that produces his desire for characters such as Amena or Melliora, it doesn't really count against his manhood according to the terms set out by Haywood concerning the relation between feeling and projective action.

What does all of this have to do with the problematics of financial speculation that I suggested at the beginning of this section were very much in the cultural air at the time of the novel's publication and distribution? Let me briefly restate some the claims made thus far. In the first place, the ethical framework of Haywood's novel does not depend upon an opposition between activity and passivity, for at some level, all of the characters move and are moved by forces both within and without the will. Secondly, speculation understood economically as projection is figurally duplicated by the adorned female body before her specular reflection in the mirror. As noted in the first section of this chapter, scenes involving self-transformation geared towards future social presentation stage a moment of self-conscious introjection of codes of civility that threaten a notion of "natural sociability"; these codes cannot be the bonds of civil society, but if they are, it is better to keep it a secret. The female body at the toilette thus becomes an alibi for a more profound anxiety concerning the basis of sociability. Haywood's novel furthers this view by not only demonstrating the destructive and anti-social consequences of speculative adornment, but by hinging gender identity on one's proclivity towards or aversion to speculative self-creation as well as the consummation of sexual desire. To the extent that the deep stabilities of Haywood's



novel depend upon the rigidity of gender roles and relations, then we can see how the *projecting subject*, divested of the body but always subject to its eventual requirements, is figured as both *anti-social* as well as *sexually undesirable*. None of this is to say that *self-interest* is negated, simply that forward-looking practices and intentions undermine a social order that figures concern for futurity as being at odds with the body. On the contrary, what Haywood's novel shows as clearly as any other novel of the period, is that self-interest, or even sexual self-interest, is neither impious nor unethical, but rather essential to the conduct of human affairs.

The bond of mutual affection between lovers is not, however, reducible to self-interest; it is, in the words of Melliora, part of larger system of social and political order:

“[Love] has many branches,” replied she; “in the first place that which we owe to heaven; in the next to our king, our country, parents, kindred, friends; and lastly, that which fancy inclines, and reason guides us to, in a partner for life; but here every circumstance must agree, parity of age, of quality, of fortune, and of humour, consent of friends, and equal affection in each other, for if any one of these particulars fail, it renders all the rest of no effect.” (109)

Haywood ventriloquizes through this paragon of virtue a view of love that one wouldn't be entirely surprised to find in the more candid moments of Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* or Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Love is organically fused to sociability generally, to political allegiance, and to religious devotion. Later in the same passage, Melliora remarks that those who love strongly “feed their new-born folly with a prospect of hope, tho' ne're so distant a one,...and in the vain pursuit of it, fly consideration,” which puts a finer point on the connection between the irrational lover and the projector (closely related to the *prospector*). When love works, it should confirm the larger order of things by uniting sameness instead of offering difference or subverting the dominant codes of age, quality, fortune, and “humour.” While Melliora's discourse seems to be a refutation of the view that people in different

circumstances cannot love, it serves equally well as a defense of what love should be; as a description it thereby functions performatively, iteratively, as a prescription. Haywood tells us both what love *is*, and what it *should be*. But this view, common as it was at the time, is nevertheless rendered more problematic by her novel's idea of how love operates. Although geared towards sociability and having practical functions in society, its primary manifestation is physiological. In the words of the Count "it [love] spreads it self thro' every faculty of the soul," although the faculties in Haywood's novel are typically figured not as a part of the soul, but of the body (108). Haywood's narrator exploits this distinction further when describing the unstoppable physiological potency of love as it begins to encroach upon the "faculties" of Melliora:

Ambition, envy, hate, fear, or anger, every other passion that finds entrance in the soul, art and discretion may disguise, but love, tho' it may be feigned, can never be concealed; not only the eyes (those true and most perfect intelligencers of the heart) but every feature, every faculty betrays it! It fills the whole air of the person possesst with it; it wanders round the mouth! plays in the voice! trembles in the accent! and shows it self a thousand different, nameless ways! (101)

Later on, Haywood's narrator again conjures this same image:

[How] much more impossible must it be entirely to conceal it [love]! What strength of boasted reason? What force of resolution? What modest fears, or cunning artifice can correct the fierceness of it's fiery flashes in the eyes, keep down the struggling sighs, command the pulse, and bid the trembling, cease? Honour, and virtue may distance bodies, but there is no power in either of these names, to stop the spring that with a rapid whirl transports us from our selves, and darts our souls into the bosom of the darling object. (121)

In terms of the story itself, these effusive descriptions of the power of love—to penetrate, manipulate and guide the body in ways other than that which such will-bound things as Honour and Virtue would—are intended to excuse the romantic coupling of D'elmont and Melliora, who is both his inferior in Fortune, his junior in age, and his ward (owing to the death of her father). But in terms of the ideological effects of the novel on the reader, they also colonize the anti-social being by producing

a sense of shame in those who do not feel these unstoppable urges. The narrator even chides the reader who presumes to understand the potency of this emotion after describing the way love acts like “the spring that... transports us from ourselves”:

This may seem strange to many even of those who call, and perhaps believe that they are lovers, but the few who have delicacy enough to feel what I but imperfectly attempt to speak, will acknowledge it for truth, and pity the distress of Melliora. (122)

Later, the narrator continues this same line of argument:

Methinks there is nothing more absurd than the notions of some people, who in other things are wise enough too; but wanting that elegance of thought, delicacy, or tenderness of soul, to receive the impression of that harmonious passion, look on those to be mad, who have any sentiments elevated above their own, and either censure, or laugh, at what they are not refined enough to comprehend. These *insipids*, who know nothing of the matter, tell us very gravely, that we *ought* to love with moderation and discretion, -- and take care that it is for our interest, -- that we should never place our affections, but where duty leads, or at least, where neither religion, reputation, or law, may be a hindrance to our wishes.—Wretches! We know all this...but perfection is not to be expected on this side the grave. (186)

The reader is asked to pay attention to and analyze the somatic consequences of love, for it is in the raw bodily effects that the truth of emotion, and hence, the truth of virtue is located. Those who suffer from love are to be no more blamed or condemned than those who suffer from “poverty, sickness, deformity, or any other misfortune incident to human nature” (186). These passages shift the grounds of legitimation of a particular mode of sociability away from a rational defense of its practical merits (such as the ability of an organized society to defend itself against aggressors or maintain property relations within it through civil law) towards a justification based upon anxiety about the physiological capacity to feel social, to feel love. In these passages, Haywood calls the *opponents* of a moral sense based conception of sociability wretches and insipids, and accuses them of not just pointing out the obvious, but missing the point altogether. It is in this way, through an emphasis upon the

irrepressible somatic energies of both intimate and social love, that Haywood perhaps surprisingly falls into line with the moral sense theorists, who Eagleton tells us are “forced to sacrifice the prospect of a *rational* totality to an intuitive logic. Unable to find ideological consensus in its actual social relations, to derive the unity of humankind from the anarchy of the market place, the ruling order must ground that consensus instead in the stubborn self-evidence of the gut,” and by “gut,” Eagleton quite literally means the gut, the body, the sensorium (38). But, if, Eagleton continues, this gut-situated ground for sociability and community “involves a kind of inner artistic miming” of the inward condition of others, and thus give rise to pity and compassion, “the very ground of our social solidarity,” it is also true that Haywood’s forced insistence upon the somatic realities of social feeling is also “a source of potential anarchy” because it “carries within it the permanent structural possibility of prejudice and extravagant fantasy.” Which is what *Love in Excess* seems to constantly remind its reader, but the novel’s solution is quite ironic: by allowing for prejudice and extravagant fantasies that derive from a body unconcerned with the future realization of those fantasies, social order is preserved. Only when the body is negated through artifice will that anarchic potential come to the fore. After Alovisa is repulsed by the Count following her initial attempt to win him through self-transformation and a billet-doux, an anarchy almost identical to Ciamara’s is realized: “she raved, she tore her hair and face, and in the extremity of her anguish was ready to lay violent hands on her own life...’till at length rage [began] to dissipate it self in tears...” (43). And after another like outburst on the part of Alovisa, the narrator remarks that “whoever had seen her in that posture would have thought she appeared more like what the Furies are represented to be, than a woman” (133), which establishes an explicit connection between physical appearance and social identity (“whoever had seen her”) while also stressing how socially destructive the repression of the body can be by

effectively taking Alovisa out of humanity altogether (she is like “the Furies”). What distinguishes Haywood’s position from Eagleton’s characterization of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson is that Haywood champions moral sensibility through the production of anxiety, through epithets, accusations of inferiority or confusion, and doubt generation (even those who think they love may not in fact be in love). As bad as this sounds, it is not meant to be a criticism, but the recognition of a particularly effective polemical strategy that pitched otherwise within the pages of a novel would quite stand out from the rest of text and allow the reader to simply dismiss such moments as didactic. Rarely have we heard of that “pedant Haywood,” though the stuff of even this her most “scandalous” fiction redounds with the moral inflections of the most sober philosophers. Perhaps one of the more interesting extensions of this line of argument is that Haywood’s notion of a social order grounded in the immediate somatic experience of love (as well as the kinds of language to which this type of experience gives rise) communicated as it is through the production of readerly anxiety about how one ought to feel, is that Haywood’s society would thus seem to need Haywood’s novels. As amatory guidebook, *Love in Excess* is precisely the kind of text that the members of Haywood’s society would find both legible and pleasing.

A brief reading of one final episode in the novel will help to clarify precisely the implications of this particular theory of speculative sociability and economic logic. Thus far, I have argued that Haywood uses the bodily perspectives of the moral sense theorists to ground her limits concerning desire. To the extent that the desire is felt in the “autotelic” authority of somatic experience, the limitation that she poses on acquisition, desire, conquest, and accumulation, is derived from the body’s feelings, a sense of community that, she often reminds us “cannot be put into words.” This forces the reader who is searching for a way of understanding how to be social without being speculative to focus not upon some abstruse rational defense but instead upon their

own felt connection between him or her and the larger social world in which they travel. The *absence* of such a felt intimacy means that legitimate social, and as I shall now argue, economic transactions are *not* taking place.

Towards the end of Part I, D'elmont's estranged wife Alovisa resolves to discover the woman who has taken her place in the Count's affections (although Haywood makes it quite clear that D'elmont's original motive for marrying her had little to do with affections). She arranges with D'elmont's so-called friend, the Baron D'espernay, to exchange her body for the name of the "curst adultress" which he has owing to his traitorous intimacy with the Count. It is not the prostitution of Alovisa's body or the Baron's treachery that is notable morally or philosophically, but the inability for the two to actually make the exchange. Like Ciamara in her closet, watching the progress of the lazy hours, Alovisa is described in this state of anxious expectation as being "inwardly tossed with a multitude of...perturbations...and [perceiving] the Baron did not come so soon as she expected, her rage broke out in all violence imaginable." This "expecting" will prove to be her undoing, for in her desire to discover the Count's secret from the Baron who desires Alovisa's body she inadvertently sets in motion a chain of events that will lead to his first true act of sexual infidelity. The Baron agrees with the Count to get him and Melliora into the same bedroom, but the equally designing, if less vicious Melantha overhears the plan and puts her self in Melliora's place. The narrative strands that shoot off from this are too numerous to mention here, but the point is that Alovisa, in her burning need to know who the Count is with agrees to sacrifice her body to the Baron. But, she her forward-looking, planning disposition leads her to enlist the aide of the Count's brother, the Chevalier Brillian. She tells him to hide in a closet until the Baron gives the name of the adultress to her, but she also knows that the Baron will tell her the name until he is close enough to her for her to prevent him from, essentially, raping

her. She suggests that Brillian wait, and when the name is uttered, rush out to defend her virtue and the honor of his brother, the Count, which would be compromised by this act of treachery on the part of the Baron. The upshot of this entire, ornate, overwrought scheme of Alovisa's is that both she and the Baron are so caught up in what will happen later, what the consequences of their "transaction" will be that the actual union of these two, the actual moment of exchange which is intimate and economic, is fundamentally impossible. The Chevalier, as the virtuous double of the Count, is required for there to be any kind of meeting or exchange between these two individuals. "Chivalry" does end up bursting from the closet to defend Alovisa. Haywood underscores the difficulty of representing the point of contact between the Baron and Alovisa by significantly narrating it not from the perspective of Alovisa herself, or even the Chevalier, but from that of Melliora and the Count who hear "a sudden cry of murder" (158). The death of the Baron and the accidentally impaling of Alovisa seem to follow quite naturally from this apotheosis of social anarchy, this inability to even conduct exchanges with like-minded individuals. Jean-Christophe Agnew has persuasively shown that there are similar dangers inherent in the scene of any exchange, and any cinematic or televisual representation of an exchange—the most familiar being an exchange between kidnappers and the Law, and between drug-dealers and drug users (or DEA agents)—between two self-serving parties seems always up in the air.<sup>65</sup> The breaking down of the exchange between Alovisa and the Baron, even exchanging commodities for which, within the moral characterology of *Love in Excess*, neither party has expressed a special solicitude, caps the end of the first two books' storylines, marks the beginning of an entirely new plot, punctuates the dramas of sexuality and sociability set up earlier and resumed in the next book, and

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<sup>65</sup> Jean-Christophe Agnew *Worlds Apart* (op. cit. 8).

demonstrates for us the intimate association Haywood imagined between moral sensitivity, sociability, and the proper course for exchange.

Haywood or her publisher chose the following epigraph for Part II, an excerpt from Dryden's translation of "The Knight's Tale":

Each day we break the bond of humane laws  
For love, and vindicate the common cause.  
Laws for defence of civil rights are placed,  
Love throws the fences down, and makes a gen'ral waste.  
Maids, widows, wives without distinction fall,  
The sweeping deluge love comes on and covers all.

While Haywood most certainly would be at issue with certain views of Dryden, this passage seems quite appropriate given the problems that I have discussed in this chapter. It was not the rational, codified Law that provides the foundations of civil society, but "love," which the pages of *Love in Excess* figure primarily as a sensitivity to the feelings of the body which lead us not to form plans, but to take action. If love is a "sweeping deluge" that renders distinctions meaningless, perhaps Haywood selected these particular words "Maids, widows, wives" not to idly point to the amorous inclinations of femininity in general, which would certainly have been Dryden's point, but to suggest that a love that binds society, might involve binding women as well. Not in corsets or dresses that look-forward from the toilet into the mirror and towards society, but in society itself, a society of feeling, sensibility, and sympathy. Of course, such a binding runs its own risks, not of becoming anarchic, as Eagleton suggests, but of transmuting those sensible bonds through a process of gendering into bonds every bit as confining as corsets or dresses. Haywood asks her reader to examine themselves for signs of love, and if they are absent, the reader is made to feel lonely at best and sociopathic at worst. Or, the signs of love might be made real by the very anxieties that incited the search in the first place. While the creation of a society of sensibility may have been the indirect outcome of such strategies of anxiety production that I



have argued marks Haywood's text, the lingering effects of sentiments closer to that of Dryden perhaps also ensured that that society would come to be associated with women.

**Chapter 3**  
**IN THE INTEREST OF SAVING TIME:**  
***TOM JONES AND THE PRUDENCE OF THE SERPENT***

In Book XV.1 of *Tom Jones* Fielding's narrator remarks that "There are a set of religious, or rather moral writers, who teach that virtue is the certain road to happiness, and vice to misery, in this world. A very wholesome and comfortable doctrine, and to which we have but one objection, namely, that it is not true" (647).<sup>66</sup> The narrator goes on to articulate a distinction between virtue understood as practical wisdom, "those cardinal virtues, which like good housewives stay at home, and mind only the business of the family," and the kind of virtue that "is always busying itself without doors, and seems as much interested in pursuing the good of others as its own." The distinction he draws upon here relies entirely upon the distinction between inside and outside, between virtue practiced "at home," in the name of housewifely economy (*oikos*: home) and that exercised "without doors," in the name of what might be called "morality." The kind of "virtue" which the narrator sees Tom practicing is of the latter kind, for Tom is throughout the novel "without doors" until he finds himself within the bars of Newgate. His journey throughout England is designed on the one hand to allow Tom to express the very type of virtue that Fielding's narrator acknowledges to be an obstacle to the attainment of happiness. On the other hand, it is this aspect of Tom's personality, his "tendency to pursue the good of others," that makes him a good man, better than Blifil, someone with whom the reader can sympathize, pity, even love. The phrase "virtue is the certain road to happiness" is parallel to the next phrase "vice to misery," and this zeugma (though this is clearly not a case of syllepsis) gives us a clue as to what Fielding means by "happiness." By

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<sup>66</sup> Henry Fielding *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*. Edited by R.P.C. Mutter. London: Penguin Books, 1985. All subsequent citations are to this edition.

happiness, Fielding must be taken to mean not “pleasure” or “felicity,” but the opposite of “misery,” namely, security or competence, the ability to put food on the table, to shelter one’s family, to keep things clean and orderly, to be “like good housewives.” He accordingly contrasts this sense of happiness with “the modern Epicureans...who place all felicity in the abundant gratification of every sensual appetite.” The real significance of the passage does not lie in Fielding’s claim that virtue precludes happiness, but rather in the very idea that happiness is a worthwhile goal. It is not goodness that is at stake for Fielding, but happiness, and as Fielding discards goodness in favor of this latter, more pragmatic terminology of security, he undermines the relevance of salvation, redemption, grace, and eternity to the moral framework of his novel. Happiness is the telos of *Tom Jones*, not goodness; but, goodness cannot merely be abandoned, it must be incorporated into happiness. That shift, from an emphasis on goodness as the right and proper end to an emphasis on happiness, simple and obvious though it may seem at first, deeply implicates the structure and morality of Fielding’s novel. Put in other terms, Fielding presents a character that is heroic only to the extent that he is incapable of attaining “happiness.” By heroic here, I mean capable of defeating enemies (in all senses), possessed of a certain set of values associated with a pre-modern, in some ways feudal ethic of brotherhood rather than with the incipient virtues of the bourgeoisie or middle-class, exhibiting a type of impulsiveness that prohibits rational foresight, and lastly, characterized by adventuring in a world that poses constant threats to his safety and security (precisely the opposite of remaining at home). Fielding’s hero is also resolutely masculine, which makes the chances of his acquiring the virtues of an orderly housewife less likely still. In this respect, the very virtues that make Tom good are the ones that make it most difficult for him to become prudent, which presents a significant conceptual challenge for Fielding and results in the narrative’s fusion of

masculine heroism and prudence at the end of the novel in a manner akin to the reconciliation of ideologies defined by J.G.A. Pocock as civic republicanism.

Some have seen in the moral plotting of Fielding's novel an uncommon brilliance, an organically realized transformation in the tradition of the great "plotters" of Western literature; others have thought Fielding's "moral" resolution to be a highly artificial device intended to merely obscure the novel's lasciviousness and depravity. Whatever we make of the novel's ending, it is worth noting the implied bawdy joke in Fielding's concluding remark that Tom acquires a degree of prudence in spite of his "lively parts." In a way, this brief locution sums up the entire moral contradiction of the text; that is, How is it possible for a good man (a sexual man, an adventuring man, a philanthropic man, an heroic man) to become a prudent man? "Lively parts"—or those parts that both get Tom into trouble as well as guarantee impulsive benevolent behaviors—are understood to be somehow at odds with prudence and discretion. This essay seeks to explore the tension between Tom's part in the novel, his own "lively parts," and the prudence imperative that Fielding sets out in an interpolated sermon in Book III and in Allworthy's "dying" remarks to Tom; and while these two speeches unequivocally articulate the positive valuation Fielding set on prudence, the novel's very conflicts, Tom's difficulties, and the plot's twists are also always owing to the absence of prudent judges in each context. This essay begins by highlighting some of the salient features of the discourse of prudence that were in the air at the time of the writing of *Tom Jones*, and demonstrates that even for the authors most explicitly concerned with extrapolating and conveying the importance of prudence in general, a certain ambivalence remains in their defenses insofar as prudence—like speculation, expectation, and scheming—entails a solicitude concerning futurity. I then go on to show how Fielding's conception of the good man in *Tom Jones* rests heavily upon Tom's inability to acknowledge the passage of time and futurity, upon his imprudence.

Although Tom's impulsiveness has long been seen as the source of his morality, I hope to go beyond thematic readings of this fact and draw attention to some of the more subtle ways that Tom's impulsiveness informs the style and language of Fielding's novel, particularly how it determines the temporality of select scenes.<sup>67</sup> Lastly, I look at the end of the novel and evaluate what I see to be a highly peremptory moral resolution against the backdrop of then-current views of the place of the hero in a world increasingly preoccupied with and, although somewhat grudgingly, increasingly tolerant of the individual's preoccupation with futurity, happiness, and foresight. For this purpose, I rely on J.G.A. Pocock's argument that the values of an older order could be, and, in fact, were reconciled with the demands of the new order by way of a financial bond that integrated the forward-looking subject's interests with those of his community.

In a recent commentary, C.J. Rawson has suggested that the question of prudence in the novel is fairly unimportant to the overall meaning of Fielding's novel, that Tom's acquisition of it is intended only to reassure the reader that he will "no longer get into scrapes" (141).<sup>68</sup> If, however, Fielding eschews a Richardsonian "paean to a block-capitalized 'amiable PRUDENTIA,'" this is not because of its triviality or lack of significance as Rawson argues. Rather

[t]he prudence Tom gains is not merely a concern for appearances, a shrewdness that will get him out of 'scrapes'—Fielding's 'uncommon Doctrine' is not that trivial. Prudence is not cleverness that happens to be applied to a good end, but a feeling for the end, a feeling for the whole. It is not one ability or virtue among others, but the way all one's good qualities are conditioned...[Tom] can become 'perfect and natural' only by becoming, in the fullest and best sense of the word, 'conventional.' He must develop that

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<sup>67</sup> I make no claims as to whether it is Fielding's language that is determinant of his conception of morality or it is his morality that shapes his use of language. Either may be the case, and I must forego assessing Fielding's intentions, beliefs, and determinations just as I must refrain from speculating on the power of language to inflect or create moral attitudes.

<sup>68</sup> Claude Rawson "Henry Fielding" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, edited by John Richetti. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

prudence, that sense of the whole, which allows man to function properly as a social being. (46)<sup>69</sup>

Fred Ribble calls attention here to the importance of the theme to the novel as a whole, but one of the shortcomings of his essay—which focuses most closely on Fielding’s indebtedness to Aristotle—is its inability to think through the “prudence theme” in terms of the narrative’s structure. It is quite easy to unequivocally state the position of Fielding and his narrator (as well as most of the characters within the novel) with respect to prudence, just as it is relatively simple to envision what is meant by prudence in the abstract. Ribble calls it a sense of the whole, which seems to be on the right track. Of course, the problem is figuring out how to reconcile that sense of the whole—a phrase that implicitly stresses the spatial nature of this sense (the social order, for instance) at the expense of a temporal and historical whole—with those aspects of Tom’s character that prevent him from having such a sense. Nevertheless, we might extend this claim, that prudence means having a sense of the whole, and draw some more specific conclusions about Fielding’s text. The issue for me is not how Tom learns prudence, but how Fielding manages to plausibly associate—within the terms of his narrative—prudence with an antithetical set of values which have come to be grouped under the name “Tom Jones.” In other words, I see Ribble’s argument as being interesting biography about Fielding’s moral vision, but not an especially useful reading of *Tom Jones*. More seriously for Ribble’s argument is that while prudence may perform a certain synthesizing function in Fielding/Aristotle’s moral dialectic, the very type of *narrative* that Fielding has given us in *Tom Jones* is possible only because his hero lacks prudence. His choice of words to describe the place of prudence in Fielding’s vision—it is a “theme”—underscores the fact that Ribble’s essay is about thematic problems, on a par with philosophical cruxes in

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<sup>69</sup> Frederick G. Ribble “Aristotle and the ‘Prudence’ Theme of *Tom Jones*” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1. Autumn 1981. 26-47.

Aristotle, rather than narrative per se. So where R.S. Crane in his seminal essay, “The Concept of Plot and the Plot of *Tom Jones*,” had tried to undermine the importance of thematic issues by focusing on the primarily formal matters of characterization and plot, Ribble’s thematic emphasis ultimately becomes a brief intellectual biography of a novelist who allegedly possesses an untroubled relation to his writing in virtue of the stabilizing effects of the Aristotelian philosophical tradition. What is required to tread between a strong thematic reading and a reading that would obscure thematic significance by insisting upon the singular importance of artistic form, is a theorization and historicization of prudence itself, a contextualization of the novel’s “theme” that refers us to narrative and that also encodes certain representational tendencies (such as the frequent association of Tom’s physical body with imprudence). That contextualization allows one to see, for instance, how Crane’s view of the novel’s plot informs and is informed by the kind of substantive moral philosophy upon which Ribble places emphasis. It is the intent of this essay to offer one possible way of thinking about how Fielding’s approach to prudence as a theme translates into both narrative possibilities and problems. Such an approach is significant in a larger sense insofar as it shows how Fielding’s novel, like the others looked at in this dissertation, engages with ethical problems pertaining to futurism and speculation; and, in this respect, it provides a critical example of the embeddedness of the problem of futurity in eighteenth-century British literature. By understanding prudence as a rhetoric explicitly concerned with the wider problems of futurity arising in the wake of the financial revolution, I hope to show that *Tom Jones* grows directly out of the need to reconcile futurism with morality. Conversely, it is this very reconciliation—effected at the novel’s end through the mutually beneficial integration of Tom and his community—that gives rise to a new kind of prudence, namely, a prudence which is

oriented towards the self but which always entails improvements to the wider community.

*THE LIMITS OF PRUDENCE, THE LIMITS OF VIRTUE*

The prudent man in eighteenth-century England is defined typically as “*quasi procul videns*, or one, who sees afar off” (140),<sup>70</sup> or a man possessed of knowledge “of things to come,”<sup>71</sup> or capable of “foreseeing by natural instinct.”<sup>72</sup> The primary function of this instincts, or knowledge, is to help enlarge one’s fortune and/or secure his or her future state. The attainment of security of which the literature concerning prudence speaks is the same as the “happiness” which Fielding argues can only be attained through the adoption of a set of virtues—all of which can be grouped under the heading of “prudence”—associated with good housekeeping. *Tom Jones* constitutes a significant, perhaps the most significant, meditation on the topic of prudence in the eighteenth century. Throughout this vast body of literature, moralists set an indiscriminately positive value on prudence but simultaneously gesture towards the idea that even this most essential human trait requires limitation and abridgement. Fielding’s novel is no exception in this regard, but before examining it in detail, I would like to highlight some of the ethical complexities raised by more explicitly philosophical defenses of prudence written in the decades preceding the publication of *Tom Jones*. Most of these works are in the guide-book tradition, intended—like *Tom Jones*—implicitly or explicitly, for young men setting out into the world (though some deign to address a female reader as well), and often are narratively framed as advice

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<sup>70</sup> James Gordon *The Character of a generous prince drawn from the great lines of heroick fortitude*, London, 1703.

<sup>71</sup> Anon. “Of Prudence, and its Profit” in *Aristotle’s secret of secrets contracted; being the sum of his advice to Alexander the Great, about the preservation of health and government*, London, 1702.

<sup>72</sup> Samuel Johnson *Dictionary of the English Language*, London, 1755.



given to a king, prince, aspiring ruler, emperor, or statesman.<sup>73</sup> Prudence would thus seem to have to do ultimately with governance and planning for future contingencies as they relate to the welfare of a state. Given, however, that the majority of these texts' readers are obviously not directly involved with such things as directing troop movements in wartime or storing up vast sums of grain for the populace in the event of a poor harvest resulting from draught, it is reasonable to assume that the practical tips that these texts offer is actually thinly veiled, primarily commercial and industrial wisdom. Within the scope of the individual reader, the closest thing to one's "kingdom" is one's business (which would be closely related to the household, as the quotation pertaining to "housewifely" economy from *Tom Jones* earlier suggested); the closest thing to one's "subjects" is one's clientele or family; and the closest things to one's "enemies" is one's competition in the marketplace as well as the chaotic forces that threaten to unsettle domestic order (most memorably depicted in "Shortly after the marriage" from Hogarth's *Marriage a la Mode* sequence). Although Macpherson's proposition that Hobbes prepared the ground for "possessive individualism" has been heavily criticized, the tendency in these texts to disguise "economic man" as an absolute ruler singularly responsible for the betterment of his realm nevertheless seems to fit into his formulation.<sup>74</sup> The ambiguous identity of the implied reader also suggests (as my inability to determine its exact referent reveals) a vague conflation of commercial practice and domestic management, concisely synthesized in the etymology of "economy." I say "conflation" with some

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<sup>73</sup> Marcus Aurelius, Emperor of Rome *The Emperor Marcus Antoninus his conversation with himself. Together with the preliminary discourse of the learned Gataker*. Translated by Jeremy Collier, M.A. (London, 1702). Contains also "The Mythological Picture of Cebes the Theban. Being a serviceable Emblem for the acquiring of Prudence, and the Direction of Human Life"; Lady Frances Norton *The Applause of Virtue: In four parts* (London, 1705). In a section entitled "Prudence Illustrated" we are given the typical list of characteristics of the prudent man (who is a French King in search of advice on how to govern): memory, intelligence, deliberation, circumspection, and vigilance (which she defines as "foreseeing the Future").

<sup>74</sup> C.B. Macpherson *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1962. See esp. 72-74.

reservations, because it implies an already extant autonomy of public and private administrative practice, an autonomy that the prudence literature's metaphorical and allegorical orientation implicitly resists. In other words, the lessons of prudence seem equally applicable to both public (commercial) and private (domestic) activity, and the ending of *Tom Jones* bears this out as well. Once Tom and Sophia marry, and Tom acquires prudence, it is ultimately unclear how it will be applied (Will Tom judiciously manage his finances? Husband his forests?). What is clear, however, is that Tom's management of his estate and Fortune are to be understood as having effects that reach beyond his own home, that it will be good only to the extent that it benefits his entire community. The difference between his home and that represented in *Shortly after the Marriage* is the difference also between public virtue and the luxuriant depravity of a self-absorbed aristocracy. I will return to the ending of the novel a bit later, but the point is that reading prudence as either a public or private trait in *Tom Jones* obscures the both/and structure that the governance metaphors of the wider prudence literature had helped to establish: the focus on statesmen and princes brings private conduct into contact with public affairs by implying that the latter is a consequence of the former (which would be less obvious if the emphasis was on the common citizen, whose private affairs have less explicitly public consequences).

*The Prudence of the Serpent and the Innocence of the Dove*

If prudence, however, offers a compelling set of guidelines for the management of both public and private affairs, then what is to be made of the moralist's inevitable remark that prudence be tempered? What might be called the moderation turn in prudence literature clearly derives from a vexing Biblical passage, Matthew X.16, in which Christ says to the disciples "I send you out like sheep among wolves; be wise as serpents, innocent as doves." Although Edmund Calamy employed the word "wise"

instead of “prudent” in this transcription of the passage for his 1713 sermon, “The Prudence of the Serpent and the Innocence of the Dove”, he used “prudence” in the sermon’s title and throughout his commentary.<sup>75</sup> Calamy’s apparent need to speak of prudence rather than wisdom suggests perhaps the urgency surrounding the former concept, or at least its currency in contemporary moral and religious discourse. Nevertheless, it is clear that Calamy thought the words to be semantic equals, and his remark that practical wisdom leads to “Happiness, Security, and Comfort” coincides perfectly with the kind of connection between prudence and happiness that Fielding would outline forty years later. It is prudence as consequentialist reasoning, as foresight, that helps to guarantee such temporal rewards as happiness and security. Calamy goes on to assess the degree of conformity his readers should have to the standard set by the similes of the passage. Throughout he asks what limits are to be set on the serpentine standard, but notably he acknowledges no necessary limit to the innocence of the dove. He quickly glosses over the fact that the serpent was the form chosen by Satan in his temptation of Eve because it was the most wise, but instead of recognizing the potentially diabolical character of the serpent itself, he tries to isolate more legitimate reasons behind Christ’s command to be “as serpents”: they protect their head, they refrain from attacking until attacked, they apparently shut their ears to charmers, and they act with art rather than force. This last is particularly troublesome as Calamy is unable to point to a meaningful naturalistic way in which actual serpents are artful without implicitly redirecting his reader back to its Satanic connotations (post hoc ergo propter hoc). In other words, the question in Calamy’s text that lingers throughout is whether Satan chose the serpentine form for the prosecution of his corruption because it embodied (or symbolized) the traits necessary for the prosecution of any scheme or whether the serpent is diabolical in its very nature.

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<sup>75</sup> Edmund Calamy *The Prudence of the Serpent and the Innocence of the Dove* (London, 1713).

Given that prudence could be both recommended by Christ and associated with the serpent, it comes as no surprise that prudence had a nasty habit of becoming diabolical without the Dove's moderating effects. Prudence is equated with the serpent in the sermon because it is known for its "subtlety," a fact that the author argues has been confirmed by naturalists. This attempt at securing the association between prudence and serpents by way of recourse to a supposedly stable (and value neutral) scientific discourse concerning nature underscores the anxiety a man such as Calamy must have experienced when instructing his parishioners to follow the way of the snake. Of course, no one took him to mean that they should exercise prudence as Satan had cunningly duped Adam and Eve—and his sermon as a whole provides some convincing reasons for the simile that are adventitious to the Genesis associations—but no one was capable of controlling the train of associative thought either, and the subsequent literature that followed Calamy's sermon repeatedly struggles not to *dissociate* prudential behavior from serpentine cunning, but to limit out its excesses by demanding that other virtues (innocence, piety, or simple goodness) be paired with it. Although the treatises concerning prudence present it as a mechanism for implementing virtue, a way of making one's virtues "useful," it is the Dove who critically supplements the advocacy of prudential wisdom, which in excess presents the kind of moral dangers that other forms of speculative or futurist dispositions were widely thought to generate. Prudence unabated implied an overly zealous preoccupation with future events that entailed usurpation of Providential decree, as well as selfish individualism and the concomitant betrayal of others in the marketplace and elsewhere.

*Prudence, Passivity, Providentialism*

Calamy's sermon, exemplary though it is, was but one of many texts in this literature to deal directly with the problem of excessive displays or exercises of prudence. His sermon, originally printed in 1713, was later revised and reprinted by Nathaniel Lardner in 1735 and again in 1743. Along related lines, James Gordon had suggested in 1703 that the prudent man "especially such Princes, are fitly compar'd to *Janus* with his two Faces, looking both behind and before him" (141). Of course, Janus was understood much more often to be duplicitous and hypocritical than simply "prudent," but prudence nonetheless calls forth such an image, regardless of Janus' vexed significations. These superficial assimilations of prudence and diabolism/hypocrisy are clear enough, but the deeper challenges presented by a moral category singularly focused upon futurity are worth examining. One of the most commonly reprinted treatises concerning prudence that spans the period of transition marked by the financial events of the 1690s is William De Britaine's *Humane Prudence, or, the art by which a man may raise himself and his fortune to grandeur*, which was in its ninth edition at the beginning of the eighteenth-century and went through four more publications in the following decades.<sup>76</sup> What De Britaine's text reveals at least as well as the others, is that "humane prudence" is an unstable concept that is as like to result in vice as virtue.

The title clearly suggests that the book is about how to use prudential wisdom to advance oneself, but the text actually champions moderation and resignation. The active pursuit of fortune, fame, honor, or power is doomed to failure, either because these rewards only bring new cares or because they are transitory and fleeting. The message of the text is encapsulated in the following maxim:

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<sup>76</sup> William De Britaine (alt. spelling: DeBrittain) *Humane Prudence, or, the art by which a man may raise himself and his fortune to grandeur* 9<sup>th</sup> Edition (London, 1702). All subsequent citations are to this edition. The text was revised and reprinted in 1710, 1717, 1726, and 1729.

If any signal Infelicity shall happen to fall upon you, the only way is, not to sit still but to resolve upon Action; for so long as nothing is done, the same Accidents which caused your Misfortune, still remain; but if you Act something, you may [ <sup>77</sup> ] deliver your self: However, you express a brave Spirit, that you durst attempt it.

But that which is out of your power, let it out of your care; you may, if you think fit, give your self much trouble, but leave God to govern the World as himself pleaseth. (164)

This is precisely the same logic that had guided the opponents of contractual lending: “that which is out of your power, let it out of your care,” for God governs the World “as himself pleaseth.” De Britaine wishes to present a theory of action, but clearly it is a theory of *reaction*. Action as such is justified only when something prompts you to it; in all other cases, there can be no explicit or acknowledgeable attempt to modulate the world. Such gestures in fact presume to dictate and determine a providentially ordered future. The problem presented by the prudent agent of action infiltrates the philosophy down to the level of the sentence itself, for the very notion of the agent, the individual who “acts” something, presents a threat to a worldview predicated on the moral superiority of what the critic Scott Paul Gordon calls the “passive self,” or a self only reactive and moved by a higher determining authority. So, the only course for a writer such as De Britaine, then, is to affect the future only when you are in a state of suffering or pain, and at all other times let God shape the world. This presents a further problem, for the ambiguity apparent in the notion of “signal Infelicity”—whether that denotes physical pain or financial distress, or, alternately, physical discomfort or temporary financial woes, or even physical dissatisfaction or financial discontent—suggests an inescapable relativism at the core of any theory of prudence: in short, prudential action is ultimately a task of naming the unnamable, of

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<sup>77</sup> At this point, the text is damaged, but only one word is rendered unreadable. I believe it to be “not.” Whether the text reads “may” or “may not,” however, the point is clear: you may or may not deliver yourself, but you will in any case be brave to attempt change.

establishing a line between modes of prudential wisdom and active manipulation of that which is “out of [one’s] power.” De Britaine’s descriptive tone, the confidence implicit in describing such an event (and presuming that his reader will know where this line is to be drawn), as if one knew just what was and was not “in one’s power” reveals the aporia at the center of his attempt to reconcile prudential action with the passive self: for one only attempts to transform what already seems to be in one’s power. De Britaine, like the other writers of prudential maxims, consistently fails to provide a concrete set of conditions for the exercise of “humane prudence,” partially because they are presenting maxims (which are definitionally not concrete) and partially because none are to be found.

In related defenses of piety, virtue, honesty, bravery, or fidelity, it is much less difficult, nevertheless, to find concrete exemplars that manifest the trait in question and thereby offer a practical model for the reader. Prudence is much dicier in this regard, largely because of the way it would seem to easily slide into Satanic cunning, Janus-like disguise, into a world of “appearances” that Fielding’s much later novel would stress as a necessary trait for a young man entering into the world. Lady Frances Norton resolved the problem similarly (1705). After stressing the importance of prudential foresight, she remarks:

To conclude: The best Wisdom is, to distrust your own Judgement, and expect all from Heaven; as saith the Prophet *David, Who bringeth the Counsel of the Heathen to naught, and maketh the Devices of the People to be of no effect, and casteth out the Counsel of Princes*. Often beg of God Wisdom from Above, which will invest you with the Possession of a true Prudence and Felicity.

Again, we see how the practical wisdom that was intended to be a “counsel” for a king in search of a way of governing is undercut by the concluding remark that the only thing we can expect is what Heaven deigns to provide for us. Even prudence itself (“the best Wisdom”) would seem to be something that “distrusts” its own judgment in

order to trust in God so that He can bestow prudence in the first place. In other words, prudence is impossible to attain without God whom we can only come to know if we already possess what only He can grant. In a way, this circularity makes perfect sense if we take prudence and Providence to be akin to one another, as the OED suggests was once the case: “L. *prudentia* foresight, sagacity, skill, prudence, contr. from *providentia* PROVIDENCE.”<sup>78</sup> Perhaps these texts’ insistence upon the distinction between what God provides (food, shelter, happiness, etc.) and what man procures for himself through practical wisdom in spite of what God provides (storms, blights, distress, etc.) is the reason for the semantic gap between the two that we acknowledge today.

*The complexities of Prudence: John Denham’s “Of Prudence”*

While prudence entails in all of this literature a particular preoccupation with futurity, more generally it could be said to have signified temporal awareness in general. For instance, John Denham associated the Providence/prudence dichotomy with the eternal/temporal dichotomy in his poem “Of Prudence”:

Yet when we’re sick the Doctor’s fetch’t in hast,  
 Leaving our great concernment to the last.  
 When we are well, our hearts are only set  
 (Which way we care not) to be Rich, or Great;  
 What shall become of all that we have got;  
 We only know that us it follows not;  
 And what a trifle is a Moments Breath,  
 Laid in the Scale with everlasting Death?  
 What’s Time, when on Eternity we think?  
 A thousand Ages in that Sea must sink;  
 Time’s nothing but a Word, a Million  
 Is full as far from Infinite as one.

In addition to espousing a common Christian axiom concerning the distinction between human time and eternity, Denham aligns this opposition with that of words

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<sup>78</sup> *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition (page 1457).



and, presumably, “real things.” His nominalist view of time (it is “nothing but a Word,” as far from eternity as “a Million” is from “Infinite”), his sense that time isn’t what really matters or what has meaning, is aligned with his critique of the contingent worlds of wealth and power (“to be Rich, or Great”). His is a kind of Christian prudence, rather than that kind of prudence that enables one to succeed at gaining wealth, fame, or power. But his next analogy (not quoted in the above passage)—suggesting that man’s reason and knowledge, quantities which God has “lent” to us, are the “two Talents” of the Biblical parable—begins to force a collapse of the distinction between Christian prudence and the business ethic. Denham goes on to write that “Lords of the World have but for Life their Lease,/ And that too, (if the Lessor please) must cease./ Death cancels Natures Bonds, but for our Deeds/ (That Debt first paid) a strict account succeeds./ If here not clear’d, no Surety-ship can Bail/ Condemned Debtors from th’Eternal Goal [sic.]” Here God is figured as a banker providing a loan or credit, a landlord capable of “leasing” life and also capable of breaking the contract as he pleases, and as a magistrate with sentencing authority. This tripartite visualization would have made sense in the context of the early eighteenth century given the ever increasing imbrication of finance and political authority (e.g.- the Bank of England, as both an economic instrument and governmental institution, as an entity that could lend, lease, and by its association with the disciplinary apparatus of the nation, sentence debtors to jail). Thomas Keith Meier’s baffling claim that “the difference between visualizing one’s God as a shepherd rather than as a banker cannot reasonably be thought to affect the quality of the religious feeling involved” may arguably have been true for someone such as Defoe, whose Dissenting Calvinist theology might have provided him with a way of imagining his piety as being one with his business (89); for the wider audience, however, the analogical shift from shepherd to banker legitimates the position of the financial speculator far more than it

edifies the religious sentiments of the Christian.<sup>79</sup> In other words, the structure of virtuous behavior as Denham figures it provides an especially useful ethical logic, even if the ends to which the business code are oriented fly in the face of the Christian ethic that generated that same logic. Moreover, the difference between the pastoral aesthetic of a shepherd-God involves the subjective imagination of a relationship of utter subservience and inferiority, whereas Denham's financial portrait of the deity suggests that there is a relationship of interdependence. Denham is rather tentative on this point, as envisioning such a parity involves both hubris and heresy (man is necessary to God; God is merely a kind of man), so at those moments where such an intimation seems inevitable, Denham redraws the analogy, internalizing it in the subjective conflict between the "Beast of Sense" and the soul God has given us. This allows him to re-figure his commercial analogy as an inner moral struggle, rather than as a battle against God. In order to make the analogies of commerce and banking palatable to an audience who would have thought a strictly economic relation to God somewhat scandalous, Denham, at critical points, relies instead on a marginally more secular conception of moral life (a life that is about managing the exchanges between the wants of the body and a rather less religious set of moral duties). Through the twists and turns of Denham's deprivileging of a starkly Christian view of morality, in representing the figure of "God" in terms of a bank(er), he, like his more financially preoccupied contemporary writers, provides a way of conceiving of a value-producing circuit as opposed to the Providentialist paradigm constituted by the distinctions of free-giver/receiver and shepherd/sheep. Even though Denham may be applying worldly experience to analogize religious experience, one side-effect of that communicative effort is to render religious experience economic in a way that goes

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<sup>79</sup> Thomas Keith Meier (op. cit. 8). Meier's claim, that "Defoe tends to be characterized as a single-dimensional commercial fanatic who was unique in his age" certainly gives rise to the boldness of his assertion.

beyond any traditional religious economy of rewards and punishments, which Meier's book goes on to assert as the primary evidence for the idea that Christian feeling can be wholly reconciled with business ethics (89). If anything, Denham shows how *financial* the religious economy of rewards and punishments always was (even the shepherd must, in due time, slaughter his sheep and take their remains to market).

Denham's text does not so much emphasize the inherently vexed nature of prudence as underscore the possibilities for its manipulation and the indeterminacy that Fielding would exploit as well as succumb to in *Tom Jones*. He recommends that his reader "Be just in all thy Actions, and if joyn'd/ With those that are not, never change thy mind;/ If ought obstruct thy Course, yet stand not still,/ But wind about, till thou have [sic.] topp'd the Hill" and later that "Justice and Faith never forsake the Wise,/ Yet may occasion put him in Disguise;/ Not turning like the Wind, but if the state/ Of things must change, he is not obstinate." Prudence justifies deviations from who we are, requiring us to "wind about" and occasionally don disguises. The problem with these claims is that Denham wishes to erect a distinction between "disguising" for good and for bad, but the antinomy he inaugurates with an already highly abstract simile ("Not turning like the Wind, but...") fails to resolve, as the opposite of "turning like the Wind" in his poem is only a negation of not turning like the Wind: "not obstinate." What counts as "Wind" here? What concrete life obstacles can readily be assimilated to such broad and indeterminate entities as wind and hills? Not that there aren't any; there are in fact too many for the advice to be of any real use to a reader. Hence, we have no sense of what ethical "disguise" is, a point which Denham further confuses in noting a few lines later that "Lies as often put on Truths Disguise." If Denham proposes disguising, and that disguise is allied with lying, then it is easy to see how Fielding might have found prudence quite corrupt in the 1740s, given the

kinds of difficult conflations and unconventional rhetorics upon which earlier discussions of prudence inevitably drew.<sup>80</sup>

Even as Denham seems to be arguing for a rather traditional view of Christian virtue, part of the point of his poem is to show how Prudence can help one to withstand the attacks of Fortune, figured as a fickle goddess here as elsewhere. He remarks that “The highest Hill, is the most slippery place,/ And Fortune mocks us with a smiling Face;/ And her unsteady Hand hath often plac’d/ Men in high Power, but seldom holds them fast.” This traditional argument for the omnipotent powers of Providence, chance, Fortune or Fate and the unstable nature of human conditions is nevertheless partially refuted at the end of Denham’s poem. He suggests that prudence might be able to help someone, even on the “highest Hill” withstand the turns of the wheel of Fortune: “So Fortunes smiles unguarded Man surprize,/But when she Frowns, he Arms, and her defies.” This passage is rather difficult to gloss because Denham is both describing and prescribing, telling us what Fortune does as well as how one might withstand her attempts to make one “low.” By arms, Denham means armed with prudence, which is far from that kind of submission to higher authority that had marked the providential worldview, his distinction between Fortune and Providence notwithstanding. My point in calling attention to these ambiguities is not to chart or digest the inconsistent and self-contradictory image-logic of Denham’s poem, which is extensive and blatant, but to suggest that there are deep and troubling semantic problems in the discourse of prudence: Who gets prudence? Who has it? What differentiates it from disguise? When is disguise itself prudent? Is prudence the knowledge of right and wrong or practical knowledge of the world (outside of moral consideration)? Is prudence to be “attained” passively or does one need to cultivate it?

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<sup>80</sup> For more on the corrupting of Prudence in popular literature of the period, see Glenn W. Hatfield “The Serpent and the Dove: Fielding’s Irony and the Prudence Theme of *Tom Jones*” *Modern Philology*, vol. 65, no. 1, August, 1967. 17-32. See esp. PP. 21-22.

Lastly, is prudence itself a virtue or is it an appendage/supplement to virtue? In the event that it is just such a supplement, does this imply that virtue itself is no longer self-sufficient or whole?

Ultimately, Denham's text fails to answer nearly all of these questions. The conceptual indeterminacy of prudence gives rise in his poem to a veritable cornucopia of analogies, similes, metaphors, extended and contained, anecdotes, maxims, proverbs, and truisms. Abstractions are given mythic concreteness; God, Christ, and Fortuna ambivalently mingle in Denham's moral parlor; ships at sea, submerged rocks, men on hilltops, bankers, landlords, and judges are all figures for universal conditions of humanity. When put in these terms, what is revealed is the carnivalesque nature of what was surely intended to be a rather sober poetical excursus on prudence. This carnival, however, is not the product of randomness, or eccentricity on Denham's part, but the inevitable result of prudence itself; it is where ethical distinctions and hierarchies break down. Prudence, we are to understand, is what allows virtue to work properly in the world, to put into practice the Christian values that lead to salvation, infinity, and union with the divine. We are, before anything else, to contemplate our true end, and prepare for death, rather than wait until we are at death's-door to repent. But the totality and absoluteness of Denham's claims for Christian virtue are undermined constantly by the demands of prudence, which structurally resemble the demands of finance against the anti-usury position, both telling us to proceed towards our goals regardless of what stands in the way, "if ought obstruct thy Course." The tension between these two positions is what gives rise to the wide-ranging and inconsistent, if not always contradictory, cast of figures Denham must invoke to communicate his point. When God doesn't suit the demands of prudence, invoke Fortuna; when the sea-faring analogy begins to founder on the rocks of Providentialism, invoke a banking analogy to return the reader to the everyday

demands of modern life; if figuring God as a trade-partner unsettles foundational theological truths, redirect the reader toward their own inner moral failings and struggles; if words, like time, (and, of course, the word “Time”) are unreal, abandon the claim and redirect the poem elsewhere (a poem made of words, intended to encourage an inherently temporal orientation).

Prudence is in this sense a problematic supplement to Christian virtue; just as writing is “a destruction of presence and disease of speech,” so does prudence come to seem a destruction of Christian ethics and a disease of virtue.<sup>81</sup> I think this analogy appropriate here, as Fielding seems to conceive of prudence as an essential supplement, it is what allows virtue to work in a world that is no longer subject to the laws and under the observation of a transcendent deity for whom the social expression and manifestation of virtue is quite irrelevant. Within a particular Christian worldview, the constant presence of and subjection to a god whose only concern is the practice of virtue, prudence, or the ability to make one’s virtue noticeable, is less important. What the emphasis on prudence in the eighteenth century points to is a current of secularization, registered in the insistence that, as the narrator of *Tom Jones* puts it, “it is not enough that your designs, nay that your actions are intrinsically good,” they must also appear to be good (111). Prudence, etymologically derived from “Providence,” is a kind of providence for a world that is not under the scrutiny of God. This is a point which many writers of the period hint at, but to which, for obvious reasons, none explicitly refer. Perhaps it is because kings and rulers occupy a liminal space (between men and God via theories of Divine Right; or simply as symbols of higher power; between having the prudence of a man and being responsible for providentially supporting his subjects) that they are the typical focal characters of the

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<sup>81</sup> Jonathan Culler *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982. P. 103. The specific quote is from Rousseau.

narrativized frames of the prudence literature I have been discussing.<sup>82</sup> Like the logos, like speech, which presents itself as a totality that claims its autonomy from a supplementary writing, but which in fact contains an originary lack that makes writing a possible substitute for it, so does Christian virtue (in a world without the unifying force of divine omniscience that makes purely virtuous action meaningful) come to seem in Fielding's novel somehow lacking, crucially in need of a way of presenting itself.<sup>83</sup> Fielding claims that prudence is "a guard to Virtue," but this would only be necessary in a corrupted or godless world in which virtue alone is somehow inadequate, where it needs to be guarded. The problem is not just one of totality and particularity, but the way in which an earlier totality (one where virtue was its own reward, ensured salvation, and was always witnessed by God, i.e.—a "pre-modern" Christian world) is replaced by a new totality (one where virtue, according to Fielding,

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<sup>82</sup> The anonymous author of *Aristotle's secret of secrets* (op. cit. 71) says of the foresight required by a king in matters concerning planning for poor harvests: "This is a matter of great Caution and Prudence; a defence of the King, Health of the People, preservation of the City; then your Precepts shall be obeyed, then your work shall prosper by your Providence; Health shall come to all, and then all shall know that your Eyes see afar, and for this they will applaud your Clemency, and fear to offend your Majesty."

<sup>83</sup> See Gracian Baltasar *The art of prudence; or, a companion for a man of sense written originally in Spanish* Trans. Mr. Savage (London, 1702) for an interesting index of the relation between the alleged completeness of virtue and the totality of the spoken word. The text, which went through multiple editions, contains maxims pertaining to foresight, making friends, being reserved, the use of wit, etc. The final chapter, entitled "*In a Word, to be Holy*", refers back to the preceding 299 maxims and intimates that what has already been said concerning prudence can be summed up as "being holy," but there has been no discussion of holiness per se, religion, piety, or even simple church-going. Suddenly, we find the author defining prudence as holiness, opening his final maxim with the following words:

That is, to speak All at once: Vertue is the Chain of Perfections, and the Centre of Felicity. It renders a Man Prudent, Attentive, Circumspect, Wise, Valiant, Reserved, Sincere, Fortunate, Plausible, True, and a Hero in All...Vertue is the Sun of the Microcosm, and a good Conscience its Hemisphere. It is so Lovely, that it gains the Favour both of Heaven and Earth...Vertue stands in need of nothing but it self. (Maxim CCC, page 280)

The encomiastic flavor of this passage is wildly out of place given the countless directions we have thus far received about how to go about appearing virtuous. We have seen in the rest of the text that "Vertue" does stand in need, that it does not "speak all at once," for it requires practical skills for its implementation, and that in many cases, it cannot exist at all without those prudential skills. The paradoxical cycle that Baltasar puts into place (that to be prudent is "In a Word," to be holy or virtuous which "renders a man Prudent, Attentive, etc."), and that apparently satisfied his many readers, suggests precisely the difficulty of imagining the proper connection between foresight and the lack of a need for it, as well as a widespread cultural blindness concerning the supposed limits set upon prudential calculation.

needs to “preserve a fair outside,” because the index and perceiver of virtue is not God, but man, and, in the novel, both the narrator and the reader who know that Tom’s lack of prudence is the reason for the narrative in the first place and are capable of witnessing his goodness for what it is). Prudence is Providence for the isolated individual in an aleatory world made up of limited individual perspectives.<sup>84</sup> Put another way, Fielding’s novelization of an imprudent man positions the reader (“Man” or “society”) in the place that the Providential figure of seventeenth-century thought had occupied vis-à-vis the individual subject until quite recently; but, that act of substitution creates a problem for Fielding insofar as the world in which Tom moves—a world in which most people do not have the privilege of being novelized nor offered a perceiver of raw, blackened virtue—demands that his protagonist acquire the essential skills of that world, in a word, prudence. Fielding’s novel, in its representation of a virtuous imprudent man appears to affirm Providentialism (the reader plays the role of God), when in fact it acts to confirm the idea that there is no just God who will reward the innocent and punish the wicked, that in this new order, the most that can be hoped for is a narrative of one’s experience. At the novel’s end, when Fielding informs us of Tom’s acquisition of prudence, we find that it is a strange appendage appended rather accidentally to his own appendage (“his lively parts”), which in virtue of those parts’ impulsive associations, aligns it with his impulsive beneficence, with what is his virtue.

### *Prudence in the Context of the Financial Revolution*

This shift from Providence to prudence raises serious questions that return us to the problems of financial foresight that always seem to linger on the boundaries of these types of shifts. I can only suggest them here by way of telescoping an historical

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<sup>84</sup> This notion of an inadequate perspective, a sense that one person cannot “take it all in” has been extensively discussed. See. Esp. John Barrell *An Equal Wide Survey* (op. cit. 58).



dynamic that is obviously much more complex, and that the introduction to this work could only sketch in brief. In the anti-usury polemical literature of the early-modern period, extending back at least as far as Luther and Calvin, a pivotal argument deployed to oppose usurious lending, and in fact any contractual form of property transfer, was that contracted loans entailed an impious usurpation of divine determining authority. If an investor lost his or her ships at sea or a farmer lost his crops to a storm, if a loan went un-repaid or a transaction failed due to the deceit of another, it was the will of God and was just, if not fortunate. Legally enforceable written contracts, however, meant that the sufferer of an economic misfortune could in many cases appeal to temporal authorities to recoup losses incurred. The financial revolution, and the countless forms of documented property arrangements and transfers that it entailed, meant that the Christian prohibition of what might be called the textually codified future (the world of contracts) was no longer a viable ideology. Contracts, usurious or otherwise, became a *sine que non* of modern financial experience, but traces of the argument against excessive or manipulative forms of financial expectation remained in the early attacks on stock-jobbers, moneylenders, annuities, futures markets, and what today are called options, or bets made on credit (usually) based on the anticipated future price of a given security. Numerous writers might be said to have helped create space for *homo economicus*, but this figure also had to be discrete from the ostensibly avaricious and self-serving members of the financial community who, with the benefit of a historical perspective, can be said to have been its finest emblems and its boldest avatars. In short, for the financial revolution to succeed, it required the efforts of writers who could formulate distinctions between modest speculation and manipulation, between moral and immoral ways of expecting, projecting, and anticipating. Prudence, therefore, serves as a central node for the articulation of these differences insofar as it was firmly

entrenched in both the Christian ethic and the business ethos. It offers itself as a way of imparting value or making virtue meaningful in an increasingly financial environment. So when Fielding tells us that prudence is the characteristic that Tom needs to acquire to be happy, and indeed virtuous, it is possible to see him laying the groundwork for a financial subject. Surely prudence retained for him its earlier Christian connotations of moral wisdom, but one need only consider the way this term has been incorporated into the general discourse of finance since the eighteenth century to recognize that in its relation to speculation and foresight Fielding's novel is also crucially engaged with financial questions, historical and ideological.<sup>85</sup>

#### *THE STORY OF PRUDENCE AND THE NOVEL OF VIRTUE*

I have briefly digested the early history of the literature of prudence in order to frame a discussion of *Tom Jones* not to reduce Fielding's text to that frame, but to highlight the rather widespread view within that literature that the need for defenses of prudence arose from a probably unconscious realization that the omniscient perspective which had entitled earlier virtuous behavior to unmitigated applause was ebbing, and that a forward-looking, consequentialist epistemology was needed for the implementation of virtue and in some cases for its very existence. What this literature reveals is an urgent cultural demand for a middle-term that might reconcile a theory of virtue for its own sake—dependent upon belief in an omniscient perceiver of individual and isolated acts—with a more modern conceptualization of risk and reward, with what Fielding called, simply, happiness. To grasp how Fielding managed to negotiate between the extremes of immediacy and calculation, between prudence unbridled and prudence

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<sup>85</sup> The Prudential financial group is only the most well-known of the hundreds of financial institutions and companies using "prudence," "prudent," or "prudential" in their names. A short list of names would include Prudent Choice (affordable health care solutions), Prudent Bear (mutual funds), Prudent Mortgage Corporation, The Prudent Speculator (asset management), Prudent Bank, Prudent Trader (investment consultants), and numerous regional real estate companies. Prudent is the name of a Romanian investment group, and Prudential ICICI is a mutual fund broker based in India.

tempered by innocence, it is necessary to think of prudence as more than a simple theme, moral, or even ideology. Ribble called it a theme, and most commentators since him have agreed by and large that it is something that the book “talks about,” an observation that is no doubt true, but which deserves reevaluation at this time.

Fielding’s novel is at one level “about” prudence, but it is also engaged with “prudence,” and informed by the very narrative structures that such a temporally determined concept generates. With an eye to prudence as a structuring mechanism—as an ethical concept that governs narrative logic, patterns, and sequences—what the critical eye observes is not just a random assortment of commentaries upon this highly charged middle-ground between Christianity and finance, but what might be described as a narrative commitment, or perhaps better, a commitment that produces a certain kind of narrative. Fielding, unlike Johnson, whom I will discuss in the following chapter, found the inability to consider the future to be the true source of narrative action. Whereas the narrative movement of *Rasselas* results from the eponymous hero’s overzealous preoccupation with his future, with his “choice of life,” Tom Jones (the character) is moved by his *inability* to see or even think of the future. The intrusive narrator, who constantly alludes to the future, frequently disavows his ability to control it; and the actual as well as implied reader may desire to know, even demand to know, the outcome of the story, but events unfold for him or her much as they do for Tom: gradually, cryptically, sequentially. It is not that Tom or the reader is unaware that things are progressing, or that the future exists, but that none have control over the events that will lead them there. It is largely because Tom and the reader are so decidedly alienated from the forces of narrative production that the latter is so apt to identify with his person and thereby sanction the choices he makes. I will add more to this later, but if one figure in Fielding’s novel represents someone who sees the future (or imagines an ability to do so), and acts upon its potentialities in the

present to secure a different one, it is obviously Blifil (who shares much in common with his projecting father in this regard). Toward the novel's end, Allworthy, after having been made aware of Blifil's elaborate schemes, remarks that he has "nursed a viper" by having had faith in that snake-in-the-grass Blifil, using a metaphor that draws on connotations obviously close to those suggested by the words of Matthew X.16, "the prudence of the serpent." What Blifil-as-viper shares with the prudent-man-as-serpent is a common preoccupation with future time and the ability to deliberate on possible courses of action that would either secure it or alter it in favor of the—*Gulp*, apologies for this—herpetological subject. Because the satanic connotations of the serpent always threaten to overwhelm the connection between the serpent and wisdom, Fielding offers an alternative to both: Tom Jones, the man of impulse.

*Impulse, Authority, and Power in Tom Jones*

It is frequently noted that Tom is "impulsive." He seems to do things without thinking, but just what do we mean when we say that he does things without thinking? In the first place, what we mean is that his actions are directly connected to his nature, that he fails to think as a result of his being; or, put another way, that his being is connected to his actions without the mediating process of thinking or reasoning. One might further ask what is it about Tom's being or nature that makes him incapable of thinking. Alternately, how does Tom's inability to think create or adjust or frame his being? We surely would not want to suggest that Tom is unintelligent, dense, stupid, dull, vulgar, or even simple. When it is required of him, Tom demonstrates an unusual capacity for understanding, even if Fielding is quick to remind us that Tom was not well bred in the ways of the world. Frequently we witness him spouting wit, accommodating himself to the manners of the times, expressing himself with an

elegance surprising for a country bastard, no less one under the tutelage of two inane sycophants.

What we mean when we call Tom impulsive is that he fails to think things through to their end. It is not that Tom doesn't think, for he frequently reflects upon past events, and Fielding gives us so many accounts of what Tom thought about Sophia, about Partridge's strange fits of passion, or his misfortunes, or his situation generally, that there is no need to rehearse them here. However, Tom's difficulties concerning "thinking," if this is even the right word here, result from a lack of consequential concern; he has no orientation towards the future, except insofar as he is necessarily propelled towards it by the narrative. Fielding's language is quite revealing in this regard. Instead of eating, Jones "swallowed a large mess of chicken...broth" (313),<sup>86</sup> while on the road to London Jones "start[s] from his chair" (535), he "directly [leaps] into the side saddle" (538), he "immediately [bespeaks] post horses" (538). In the scene that introduces us to the Man of the Hill, we see Tom charge out of the Old

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<sup>86</sup> Bourdieu helps to grasp how Tom's eating habits differentiate him from those forward looking processes of deferral and decorum that would come to mark the bourgeoisie: "The relation to food – the primary need and pleasure – is only one dimension of the bourgeois relation to the social world. The opposition between the immediate and the deferred..., which is exposed in a particularly striking fashion in the bourgeois way of eating, is the basis of all aestheticization of practice and every aesthetic...It is also a whole relationship to animal nature, to primary needs and the populace who indulge them without restraint" (196). In addition to this "swallow," one thinks of Jones' "healthy" drinking following Allworthy's recovery; his gustatory-cum-sexual pleasure with Mrs. Waters at Upton; and his attitude towards a shoulder of cold beef subsequent to his lying-in after the bottle incident involving Northerton. Bourdieu notes that "the 'modest' taste which can defer its gratification is opposed to the spontaneous materialism of the working classes, who refuse to participate in the Benthamite calculation of pleasures and pains, benefits and costs (e.g., for health and beauty). In other words, these two relations to the 'fruits of the earth' are grounded in two dispositions towards the future which are themselves related in circular causality to two objective futures...[The] propensity to subordinate present desires to future desires depends on the extent to which this sacrifice is 'reasonable,' that is, on the likelihood, in any case of obtaining future satisfactions superior to those sacrificed" (180). Because, as Bourdieu would put it, at these various moments of consumption in the novel Tom "has no future and, in any case, little to expect from the future" (181), it makes sense for him to gratify immediate needs. This, of course, will change at the end when all he has is a future at Paradise Hall. More on this below. Bourdieu's theory of consumption is derived from careful analysis of the consumption patterns of modern French classes, so where he sees this immediacy as corresponding to "the working class," in Tom Jones this orientation towards the present is as much a feature of the "futureless" poor as well as the futureless wanderer. Pierre Bourdieu *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* Trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1984).

Man's house: "Jones...*instantly sallied out... asked no questions*, [and] fell so briskly to work with his broad-sword, that the fellows *immediately* quitted their hold, and without offering to attack our hero, betook themselves to their heels" (emphasis mine; 361). The ruffians are heard (by Tom? by the narrator?) lamenting their sudden fate: "[they] cried out with bitter oaths, that they were dead men." They are as powerless in the face of Tom's sudden, though apparently rather brief onslaught—the "fellows *immediately* quitted their hold"—as the drubbed-but-no-worse-for-wear Old Man was in relation to them. Similarly, in the scene involving the puppeteer and the Merry Andrew, in which the former attacks the latter, Jones "*instantly* interposed on behalf of the suffering party" (534). And a bit later, when Jones rescues Nightingale from the belligerent footman in the house of Mrs. Miller, we learn that after hearing the commotion below, "Jones, who was never backward on any occasion, to help the distressed, *immediately* ran downstairs" and after an equally brief and equally decisive scuffle, ends up besting Nightingale's irascible servant (570). Each of these examples, as well as that concerning the rapacious soldier Northerton, follow the logic of a triangular structure of force and legitimacy. Nightingale's footman is described as being "no more able to contend with Jones, than his master had been to contend with him," and "the puppet-show man was no more able to contend with Jones, than the poor party-coloured jester had been to contend with this puppet-man," and although the language in the Northerton episode is not quite so close as these two are, Jones makes "good use of his trusty oaken stick" to flatten his antagonist just as Northerton was about to make use of his own "trusty stick" on his victim (401). I call it a triangulation rather than a simple hierarchy because while physical power puts Tom at the top of such a hierarchy and the original victim at the bottom, leaving the perpetrator in the middle, Tom and the original victim are more just, moral, and

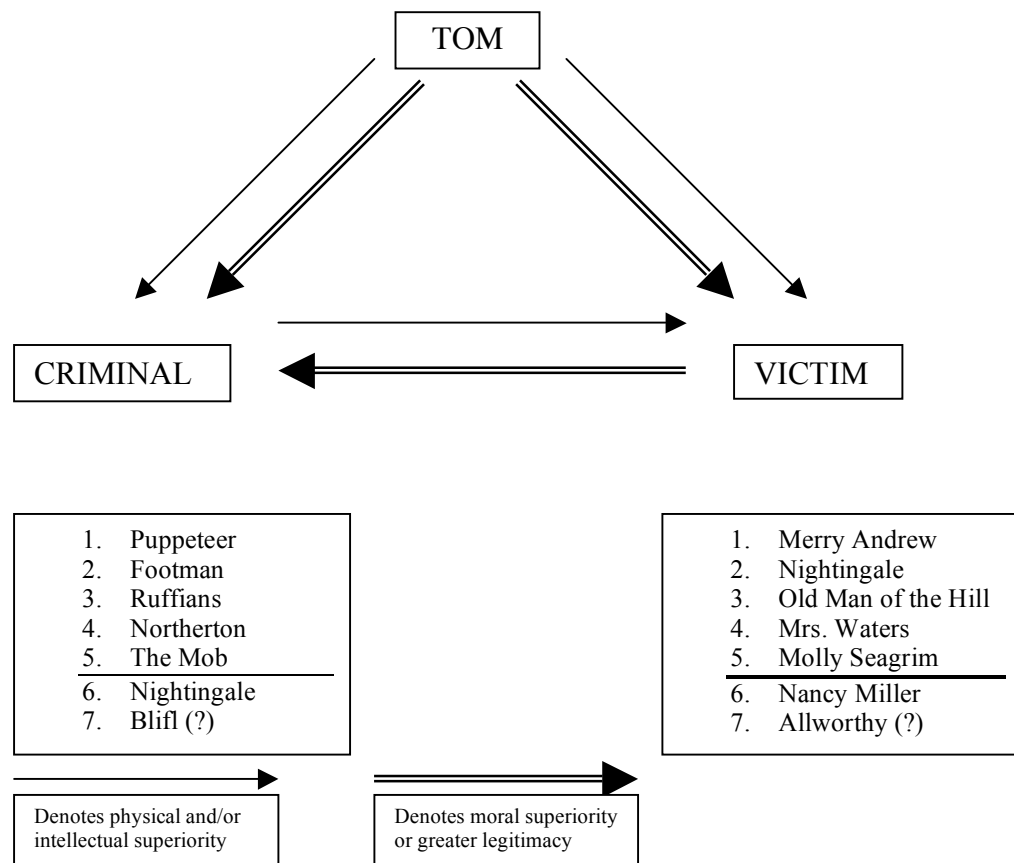
legitimate, than the original perpetrator (figure 1).<sup>87</sup> Moreover, what this triangle suggests is that moral distinctions are articulated to precisely the same degree of specificity and determination as physical or intellectual distinctions; or, rather, violent physical acts (as well as acts of intellectual or conversational “conquest”) reinforce the conceptual stability of Fielding’s moral hierarchy within the novel. Arguably, it is through the representation of comparatively unproblematic physical interaction between the characters of Fielding’s novel that the more ambiguous moral architecture becomes stabilized (is it not tempting to excuse Squire Western’s erstwhile quite violent patriarchal misogyny directed at both his sister and Sophia when we see him offer the rapacious Lord Fellamar a sound drubbing?). However one looks at this relation between what I will call “moral legitimacy” and acts of conquest (physical or intellectual), the point is that there is a repeated narrative of physical conquest (or, more generally, practical triumph) to sustain and embolden the starkness of Fielding’s moral vision.

Notably, Tom is not on the same plane of moral legitimacy as the victims. In each case he is more authoritative, respectable, moral, etc. In the case of Mrs. Waters, we are led to believe that she tempts Jones; Nancy Miller and Molly Seagrim have fornicated outside of wedlock (which is acceptable for a male, but not for a female); the Man of the Hill is a cynical misanthrope who is, if anything, amoral; the Merry Andrew flirts with theft; the footman forgets his place; and Allworthy I must leave for a moment, but the pattern bears out in his case as well, though for more complicated reasons. What overlaying physical conquest with the novel’s moral hierarchies reveals is that immediate, unthinking, instantaneous behaviors, behaviors which all bear the

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<sup>87</sup> It might be objected that Allworthy is morally superior to or more legitimate than Tom, but I would disagree with this evaluation. While both Allworthy and Tom suffer from a lack of prudence or judgment, the important difference is that while Tom’s imprudence only really affects Tom, because of Allworthy’s stature (economic and political authority over Tom), his imprudence hurts others. To say that Allworthy is more legitimate within the moral framework of Fielding’s novel is to ignore the fact that Allworthy is, in one respect, the means by which Tom is made to suffer.

stamp of imprudence, all work to create a structure of values that are entirely at odds with the alleged goal of making Tom Jones a prudent man. In other words, what generates narrative movement in the novel, and what causes Tom to be heroic (in the senses outlined in the opening section of this chapter), are so deeply embedded in the fabric of the novel as to make the possibility of Tom's prudential transformation a veritable impossibility.



**Figure 1. Ethical and physical dynamics in *Tom Jones*.**

### *Fielding's Politics of Sight*

These power dynamics all result from Tom's quick and unthinking actions, all of which are spurred by non-visual cues: a "violent uproar," "a most violent noise," "the most violent screams of a woman," in the case of the Man of the Hill, Tom hears a



verbal report of his abuse from the Man of the Hill's serving woman, and Mrs. Miller, not Nancy or Nightingale, informs him second-hand of the ruination the latter has brought upon the former. Tom's inability to *see* what is happening plays an important role here in the literary construction of his nature, as sight always points forward, toward the future in a sense; whereas while the aural is to an extent directional, it does not have the definite shape that visual phenomena possess, and thus Tom's behavior in these instances comes to seem to be the result of his own impulsiveness rather than the effect of a calculative and comparative assessment of the scene which visual apprehension would allow. If Tom could witness first-hand what he was up against, Fielding would have found himself perhaps forced to present Jones' conscious willingness to engage violently (which would suggest pride or perhaps bullying), a conscious reticence to engage with superior forces (cowardice), or a conscious reticence to violently engage with inferior forces (moral righteousness that impedes Tom from resolving the conflict; or perhaps even priggishness). Tom's own violent responses to these "violent" sounds are less ironic than a confirmation of Tom's oneness with the very situations that "call" for his attention and assistance. If we approach Tom as though he has a "nature," as much criticism of *Tom Jones* often relies upon for rhetorical force, we can easily say that if he visually apprehended each of these attacks he would have acted in the same way, but the point is that Tom's nature is intimately bound up with his *not seeing*, and more specifically, with not seeing what is ahead of him, spatially and temporally. This helps to account for Jones' remark to Nightingale regarding Sophia's physical beauty, "that though she is never from my thoughts, I scarce ever think of her beauty, but when I see it" (678). Jones' gradual progression towards her must be figured in non-visual terms; should he see her, he will delight in her beauty—as he memorably does with the aid of a mirror in the meeting prior to their marriage—but the lack of a visual imagination prevents his

quest from being contaminated by the comparative and calculative judgments which sight engenders. That Tom's ultimate testament of his affections for Sophia is his presentation of a mirror rather than an encomium to her physical beauty (which amounts to the same thing insofar as it is her beauty that is re-presented to her) further shows Tom's simultaneous *ability* to see, and his inability to avow that act of seeing. The same might be said of the narrator's description of Fanny at the end of *Joseph Andrews*. Because Fanny's charms are all the "Gifts of Nature" it is unnecessary and indeed impossible for her to divest herself of them prior to the consummation of her marriage to Joseph. In keeping with this sense of the un-mediated relation between Fanny and her "charms," the narrator, who apparently can see her, offers instead a non-visual description of her to a reader who can at best imagine her in the abstract: "the Bloom of Roses and Lillies might a little illustrate her Complexion, or their Smell her Sweetness: but to comprehend her entirely, conceive Youth, Health, Bloom, Beauty, Neatness, and Innocence in her Bridal-Bed; conceive all these in their utmost Perfection, and you may place the charming *Fanny's* Picture before your Eyes" (269).<sup>88</sup> The process of visual disavowal in Fielding's fiction is not in any way duplicitous—as if the mirror-tactic was simply a ruse or a clever trick played by Tom to appeal to Sophia's vanity or the description of Fanny meant to point towards the loftiness of the narrator's subject—but is rather the necessary consequence of Fielding's view that visual apprehension always renders the *object* of visual perception a disservice by imparting to the viewing subject a "Picture" that cancels out the purity of appreciation or adoration. Fielding's persistent unwillingness (or inability) to visually anatomize his female characters for the reader (or for his protagonists) may be the result of his view that there is something too sordidly materialistic in such a representation. And by "materialistic," I mean both bodily and monetary, for within

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<sup>88</sup> Henry Fielding *Joseph Andrews*, edited by Homer Goldberg. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987. I thank Rick Bogel for the reference to this moment.

the terms of Fielding's fiction Blifil's calculative attitude towards Sophia's estate seems to be on a moral par with the aesthetic subject who charts and revels in the physical charms of the feminine body. The narrators' tendency to describe his heroines as simply "beautiful" eludes this materialistic orientation while being nevertheless visual only because such a description says so very little.

I suggested that these aural—or, what is more important, *non-visual*—cues help position Tom at the apex of power triangles in these three scenes, but this structure is duplicated on countless figurative levels of the novel. In his rescue of Molly Seagrim from the menacing taunts and blows of the *hoipoloi*, in his broader "rescue" of Allworthy's fortune from Blifil's gross abuse, and similarly, in his rescue of Nancy Miller from the rakish Nightingale (through moral counseling).<sup>89</sup> Consider that the crowd outside of the church has no more ability to contend with Tom's authority than Molly has in contending with their ostracization tactics (for even if her fiery defense counts for a temporary victory, it is Tom's avowal of her in public that truly silences the mob); Nightingale stands no better chance against the moral logic of Tom's address than Nancy has in convincing him [Nightingale] to abandon his rakish ways; Blifil ultimately has as little chance of triumphing over Tom as Allworthy has of seeing through Blifil's elaborate schemes. On top of the narrator's occasional reassurances that things may turn out well for Tom (which are always balanced by his claim that Tom "was born to be hanged"), this repeating triangular structure—where equivalent power differentials between the middle term (original victim) and both the lower term (the original "criminal") and the higher term (the rescuer, Tom) are revealed through scenes of confrontation—is one of the things that make Tom's ultimate redemption and elevation seem so imminent to the reader in spite of his countless local difficulties.

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<sup>89</sup> Geoffrey Sill (op. cit. 58) has pointed to the way in which Tom acts in a way similar to Hutcheson's "moral physician."

That large, structural property of the novel owes as much to Fielding's distrust of prudential wisdom as those microcosmic episodes obey an explicitly anti-visual perceptual ethic. In the scene immediately preceding the end of the Man of the Hill episode, up to and including Tom's encounter with Northerton and Mrs. Waters/Jones, Fielding quite cleverly folds that localized view of visibility into the larger problem of Tom's sense of the future, or rather his lack of one. After the Man of the Hill and Tom have ascended the fictitious "Mazard Hill," a hill most likely to be located in the lower Malverns, Tom approaches the edge:

Jones stood for some minutes fixed in one posture, and directing his eyes towards the south; upon which the old gentleman asked, What he was looking at with so much attention? 'Alas, sir,' answered he, with a sigh, 'I was endeavouring to trace out my own journey hither. Good heavens! what a distance is Gloucester from us! What a vast tract of land must be between me and my own home.' 'Ay, ay, you love better than your own home, or I am mistaken. I perceive now the object of your contemplation is not within your sight, and yet I fancy you have a pleasure in looking that way.' Jones answered with a smile...(400)

Tom is always looking backward, but never forward. He sees the landscape behind him, but just when he turns his gaze in a direction that he might go—and indeed, does go—in the future, we find that "Here they were *no sooner* arrived, than they heard at a distance the most violent screams of a woman, proceeding from the wood below them. Jones listened a *moment*, and then, *without saying a word* to his companion (for indeed the occasion seemed sufficiently pressing) *ran*, or rather *slid*, down the hill, and *without the least apprehension or concern* for his own safety, made *directly* to the thicket whence the sound had issued" (emphasis mine; 400). At this precise middle point of the novel—insofar as the entire episode is the novel's center point, and this is its resolution—we see Tom impelled to look back towards his past, the road already traveled, and then on the point of looking towards his future, interrupted by aural cue that sends him immediately into action. Whether one takes the incident on top of

Mazard Hill as an allegorical mid-point for Tom's travels from Somersetshire to London, or simply as an episode like any other, we find Fielding employing the same strategies that guide him in other scenes and in other narratives within the text of *Tom Jones*.<sup>90</sup> We see Tom incapable of being "apprehensive" or "concerned," he makes "directly" to the scene of the crime after parting from the loquacious recluse who has entertained him for a good while at this point, which is interestingly excused by way of Fielding's parenthetical remark that the "occasion seemed sufficiently pressing." This apology for Tom's seemingly rude behavior might be humorous if the context in which the reader found it was not already so saturated with references to Tom's immediacy and the urgency of the situation that it seems really more like the beating of a dead horse (Isn't a violently screaming woman in the woods enough of an excuse? Does the narrator really need to defend Tom's peremptory decision to help?). Shortly after Tom reaches the bottom of the hill, we get additional instances of the collapse between Tom's perceptions and his actions: "He *had not entered far* into the wood before he beheld a most shocking sight indeed...", and then "Jones *asked no questions* at this interval; but fell *instantly* upon the villain..." While admittedly Tom is now presented as *beholding* a "most shocking sight," this is an absolute requirement for Fielding insofar as his character is not entirely blind. If anything, the still more intense narrative compression—he beholds and falls upon the villain almost at once—underscores the fact that Tom is not to be thought of as a visual deliberator. Given this density of collapses—Tom and the scene of the crime, the sound of the scream and Tom's reckless plummet down the hill, as well as his related potentially unmannerly departure from the Man of the Hill, reaching the bottom of the hill and witnessing the

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<sup>90</sup> As an aside, I find it impossible to read "Mazard Hill" without seeing "Hazard Hill," or possibly "Hazard Mill", given that "mazzard" was only very infrequently used even in the eighteenth century to denote "a face" or "a drinking cup." That Tom finds himself atop a hill from which he might allegorically view the risks he will run puts a finer—although highly subjective and speculative—point on that which I argue in the main body of this essay.

crime (“He had not entered far...”), his beholding the scene and “falling upon” the villain, and finally his falling upon the villain and laying him out, “before he [Northerton] could defend himself”—it is surprising that critics have been able to get away with simply noting that Tom has an impulsive nature. Adding to the extraordinarily rushed and temporally collapsing character of this scene is the fact that it interrupts Tom who looks both to the South (Gloucester) and the Northwest (the wood and Wales), but not to the East, which is where Upton (his next destination), and then London (his primary destination) lay. I would like to suggest that this almost ludicrous agglomeration of features dealing quite specifically with the problem of foresight and consequential reasoning amount to more than a character trait in the figure of Tom. Fielding’s use and omission of visualization and consequentialist reasoning in fact guides both his delineation of characters as well as the encounters between them that determine the very shape of his plot.<sup>91</sup>

### *Prudence in Excess*

While Glenn Hatfield’s theory (op. cit. 80) does help to account for the novel’s occasional sarcastic deployment of the word “Prudence”—as when the narrator describes Lady Bellaston as “prudent” in her scheming—it needs to be noted that while prudence may be artificially limited by an adventitious association with an external and moderating abstraction (such as virtue, piety, holiness, patriotism, etc.), in and of itself it could be transformed into something diabolical, into a characteristic that we would more closely associate with Blifil, Lady Bellaston, Black George, Mrs. Deborah, or even Partridge (with his constant “fearful expectations” and “apprehensions”) rather than Tom. I would argue that prudence may very well be the

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<sup>91</sup> For a very different explanation of Fielding’s treatment of this episode and his refusal to describe what it is that Tom sees, see Wolfram Schmidgen *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Law of Property*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Schmidgen does not account for the suggestive directionality of Jones’ gaze, only on the fact that his prospect goes unarticulated.

value that Fielding wished to inculcate in the minds of his readers, but, given the moral universe that structures his novel, he also finds himself unable to unequivocally endorse it. As much as Fielding would like to see Tom learn the value of prudence, he is aware that there is something problematic about it, that there is a not-quite-explicit scandal at the base of prudential behavior. To resolve his novel, then, Tom's prudential transformation is no sooner asserted than it is displaced by the narrator's recognition of Tom's contributions to the social whole, something which becomes bound up with Tom's "lively parts," or those parts that both ensure that he is *not* prudent when he is required to help others, and that help him to reproduce and add to the "stock" of his community and his country. Prudence, then, is viable and valuable only insofar as its products, the advantages which it confers upon its subjects, can be recycled to contribute to the larger community. The kind of prudence that Fielding's novel ultimately would seem to endorse would be a kind whose redemption from the abyss of self-interest, scheming, projection, and indeed visualization (associated as it is with calculation, cunning, and comparative judgment), must derive from its orientation towards the public. In other words, in order for prudence to be given a positive valuation, it must direct itself away from the future of the prudent man, and towards the future of the prudent man's community. At the same time, in order for it to be different from benevolent impulsiveness that is necessarily directed towards the community, it must at some level also improve the standing of the prudent man, it must at some level advantage him. To reconcile benevolence with prudence, to offer something like a wedding of the aristocratic and the financial ethos, Fielding requires his reader to situate Tom's acquisition of a prudential ethic within the terms of the value producing circuit of individual and nation that Pocock has conveniently labeled "civic republicanism."<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> J.G.A. Pocock *The Machiavellian Moment* (op. cit. 5). For more on how this specifically relates to

It is a critical commonplace that Jones' Achilles heel is an utter lack of foresight, an utter lack of prudence, a claim that owes itself largely to Fielding's interpolated sermon on prudence included in Book III of the novel. Claude Rawson points out that when at the end of the story Fielding informs us that Tom had "acquired a Discretion and Prudence very uncommon in one of his lively parts" it strikes the reader less as "a moral reformation" and more "of a convenient tidying up."<sup>93</sup> He then goes on to remark the following:

[Tom] has grown up, married his sweetheart, and will no longer get into scrapes. The change has sometimes been invested by critics with a moral and even a theological gravity inappropriate to the case, and it seems preferable to insist on the more low-key satisfactions, which derive from the assurance in romance and comic plots that the good characters may be expected to live happily ever after.

Rawson's "Aren't-you-reading-too-much-into-it?" attitude towards criticism that tries to find significance to the novel's ending, to the ending of what some might call the most important novel of the eighteenth century no less, is surprising and I think, misguided. In fairness, I think that he is right to the extent that Fielding is tidying things up, but tidying comes in many forms as my apartment can attest: sometimes tidying means taking out the trash, at other times it means shelving the piles of books around this desk. Why does Fielding "tidy up" in this manner? Is Jones dirty without prudence? Or is prudence dirty without Tom? Moreover, what is it about prudence that makes it so difficult for Jones to more organically acquire it? Why isn't there a moral reformation? I do agree with Rawson that Fielding wishes to make his newly betrothed couple live "happily ever after," but it is still not clear what prudence has to do with that storied felicity. Countless other virtues appear in the pages of the text, filial piety, honor, honesty, forgiveness, I could go on; yet, it is prudence that is singled out for the

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Fielding's time, see esp. III. XIII "Neo-Machiavellian Political Economy." P. 423.

<sup>93</sup> Claude Rawson (op. cit. 68).



novel's penultimate paragraph.<sup>94</sup> As I have mentioned, in Book III, the intrusive narrator offers the following wisdom.

Prudence and circumspection are necessary even to the best of men. They are indeed as it were a guard to Virtue, without which she can never be safe. It is not enough that your designs, nay that your actions, are intrinsically good, you must take care they shall appear so. If your inside be never so beautiful, you must preserve a fair outside also.

This sermonizing moment is echoed repeatedly in the novel, whenever the narrator decides to remind us that Tom was not on his guard. The novel is structured as an opposition between Tom on the one hand, bereft of anything resembling prudence and foresight concerning his actions, and the diabolically prudential Blifil who is capable of tinkering with the most minute springs of the world to effect improvements on his own future, his financial future in particular. Part of the difficulty that Fielding faces in trying to convert Tom from his impulsive generosity to a state of prudence is that there is a constant risk of pushing Tom too far, of giving him so much foresight that he comes to resemble the scheming Blifil or the designing Lady Bellaston. For even when prudence doesn't become evil, it often presents an obstacle to the exercise of other virtues. Fielding is clearly aware of this possibility as his discourse in Book III goes on to somewhat dangerously invoke what was the quintessential incarnation of the manipulative and conniving subject, the ornamented female body:

It is not enough that your designs, nay that your actions, are intrinsically good, you must take care they shall appear so. If your inside be never so beautiful, you must preserve a fair outside also... Let this, my young readers, be your constant maxim, That no man can be good enough to enable him to neglect the rules of prudence; nor will Virtue herself look beautiful, unless she be bedecked with the outward ornaments of decency and decorum.

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<sup>94</sup> Fielding's ending is perhaps a play on Michael's claim to Adam at the end of *Paradise Lost* that charity, "the soul of all [other virtues]," be added to make life easier and better (XII.580-586). What Tom is lacking is not charity, but the means to be charitable and happy at the same time. Thanks to Rick Bogel for the reference.

The idea that virtue could not expose herself in the nude constitutes a significant departure from those encomia to virtue that praise precisely artless simplicity and disinterested benevolence and that condemn the base acts of ornamentation and conscious self-fashioning that define half of Pope's agenda in *Rape of the Lock*. This is a significant departure from Richardson, as well, and it is clear from Fielding's language—"bedecked," "outward," "ornament"—that he imagined himself to be boldly confronting the author of *Pamela*. This is also at odds with moral sense theory, for Shaftesbury's society of manners can effectively function only if "ethical ideology...lose[s] its coercive force and reappear[s] as a principle of spontaneous consensus within social life," and Fielding is here scandalously exposing the fact that the introjection of an ethical code proper to modern society might just have to be a function of calculation. It is useful to recall here Denham's ambivalent claim that prudence occasionally necessitates "Disguise" but that lies themselves are often "disguised as Truth." By demanding that it be "bedecked" with "ornament," Fielding removes virtue from an atemporal world of plenitude and fullness, where virtue can exist by itself and for itself, and places her firmly into, as Lukács might have put it, a historical world whose proper genre is the novel. Essentially, virtuous behavior is quite irrelevant insofar as this narrative's moral universe is concerned because virtue without its prudential disguise runs the risk of being misinterpreted, having her character "blackened" as Fielding puts it. Moreover, the chronotope of Fielding's novel demands that his protagonist suffer from a lack of prudence, not virtue. Prudent heroes, Fielding might almost have said, don't make especially interesting ones. Virtue may very well continue to exist for itself, but it cannot exist for anyone else, which is to say that it cannot confer advantages to its devotees.

Prudence, then, is the way by which virtue becomes advantage, and goodness enters the corrupted world of history, and as Fielding reminds us, his story is in fact "a

kind of History.” However, prudence is a discourse, not an absolute truth, and Fielding is quite aware of its potential to be (mis)appropriated. For instance, in Book VI, Mrs. Western, Sophia’s aunt, is described as having busied Sophia “with lectures of prudence, recommending her the example of the polite world, where love...is at present entirely laughed at, and where women consider matrimony, as men do offices of public trust, only as the means of making their fortunes, and of advancing themselves in the world.” Fielding then adds, “In commenting on which text Mrs. Western had displayed her eloquence during several hours. // These sagacious lectures, though little suited either to the taste or inclination of Sophia, were, however, less irksome to her than her own thoughts...” The joke, of course, results from the fact that had her lectures actually been eloquent or sagacious, Fielding would have included them, as he does with Allworthy’s moral lectures to Tom. The fact that the narrator merely points to their eloquence and sagacity is the mark of his contempt for her address. This technique of naming greatness or merit rather than showing it is how Fielding’s satire works in parts of *Tom Jones* and throughout *Jonathan Wild*. So, on the level of content, Fielding points to the malleability of the discourse of prudence, showing how easily it can be put into the service of Mrs. Western’s superficiality and avarice and, more generally, satisfies the demands of the marriage market. On the level of form, Fielding shows that simply *appearing* eloquent and sagacious (both “prudent” characteristics) is inadequate to produce advantage within the pages of a novel (the experience of reading which I noted earlier was structurally analogous to the Providential worldview because it reveals to the reader what cannot be seen by society), which was precisely what he puts forward when recommending that virtue be bedecked to conform to standards of decency and decorum. Mrs. Western presumably has good intentions in lecturing to Sophia and she bedecks those intentions with ornament, spending “several hours” with her, and yet she is ridiculed for these efforts.

By refusing to allow the lectures themselves to appear, and by simultaneously pointing to their ornamentation, Fielding allows the novel to do the work of a Providential deity who would scorn ornamented lectures recommending “the example of polite society.” Mrs. Western is incapable of communicating with Sophia, in spite of the fact that her lectures are, in the eye of a narratorial persona that articulates the judgments of an unthinking and deluded social body, in line with decency and decorum. The point is that Fielding is not just highlighting the corrupt status of the word “prudence,” as Hatfield argues, but playing the importance of social calculation (prudence, ornament, eloquence, etc.) against the novel’s function as a substitute for Providence. Hence, any character who, in an ornamented fashion, recommends prudence, suffers the fate of being ridiculed by a narrator whose authority is grounded in his knowledge that society and the ornamentation it demands always suggests hypocrisy and stupidity.

In book XII, chapter 4, we see how prudential ethics bear further on matters financial. In this chapter, a poor beggar seeking alms from Jones and Partridge offers to sell them a “little gilt pocket-book” that Jones recognizes to be Sophia’s. In the pocket-book is a 100 pound note of which the illiterate beggar is unaware. To say that Fielding’s use of “prudence” in this passage is mere sarcasm would be, I think, to miss the more important fact that it is a perfect choice of words (I include a transposition of the sums mentioned for the sake of more ready comprehension and comparison):

The pocket-book was a late present from Mrs. Western to her niece: it had cost five and twenty shillings [300 pence], having been bought of a celebrated toyman, but the real value of the silver which it contained in its clasp, was about 18d. [18 pence] and that price the said toyman, as it was altogether as good as when it first issued from his shop, would now have given for it. A prudent person would, however, have taken proper advantage of the ignorance of this fellow, and would not have offered more than a shilling [12 pence], or perhaps sixpence for it; nay, some perhaps would have given nothing, and left the fellow to his action of trover, which some learned serjeants may doubt whether he could under these circumstances, have maintained. (520)

Again, Fielding points to the way in which prudence quickly becomes tied to ingratitude and dishonesty. In the first place, the narrator describes a series of “prudential” financial misdeeds. First, the toyman who makes the pocket-book and who would pay 18 pence for it we learn has sold it for almost 17 times its intrinsic value to Mrs. Western who has apparently been seduced by the brand itself; second, Fielding suggests that prudence is really simply a matter of getting the most out of your money and that the man who would give the beggar nothing is more prudent than the one who would cheat him out of it for sixpence, who is in turn more prudent than the one who would cheat him out of it for a shilling, or 12 pence. Prudence shows itself to be a sliding and shifting thing whose logic always threatens to muddle the line between judiciousness and cheating. Fielding, as anxious to prevent Tom from appearing ungrateful as he is to convince his audience that prudence is not always the best course, remarks that “Jones...[who] was on the outside of generosity, and may perhaps not very unjustly have been suspected of extravagance, *without any hesitation*, gave a guinea [252 pence] in exchange for the book.” That Jones in fact pays the beggar less than what Mrs. Western has (4 shillings less, to be exact) suggests that even Tom’s generosity is not unbounded, even if the narrator suggests that Tom has been extravagant.

The lines between unbounded generosity, fairness, prudence, and unbounded desire become extremely muddled in a case such as this, which necessitates alternate strategies for the representation of Tom’s morality. The phrase that is most significant for my purposes is “without any hesitation,” for it is clear that Fielding feels as though he cannot simply make Tom generous, but that he must make his generosity something that exists outside of and in fact independent of Time itself. There can be no interval between recognition of debt and its repayment. Generosity is signaled not only by the quantity of money he gives to the beggar, but also by the interval of time

separating his desire to give from actually giving.<sup>95</sup> By again cutting the time between the impulse and the action, by saving time, Fielding figures generosity as more a *reaction*, impulsive and unmotivated, than an action with a corresponding intention. Later, when Tom is describing his antipathy towards Blifil's values to Dowling, he remarks that he "would not think [himself] a rascal half an hour...to exchange situations" with Blifil. There is no time during which Tom will entertain a mode of enjoyment that is dependent upon those things that only time-consciousness can secure. This informs Fielding's representation of morality as it manifests itself temporally: Tom's inability to stomach a single moment of calculation, speculation, or expectation, means that he can never truly embrace the value of prudence. Prudence is the awareness that things change in time, and for Tom, there is no such thing as a valuable, changing thing. He remarks elsewhere that he "*never once* considered what [Allworthy] could or might give me" (543); that he "*never had any view*" to take Allworthy's fortune (543). The moral sense that Fielding creates in his novel is thus inextricably bound up with Tom's sense of time, or rather, his lack of a sense of future time, and his corresponding tendency to make any calculative decision seem anathema to the type of man that he represents. Empson remarks that Tom's generosity to the highwayman in XII.14 shows a lack of calculation, and that same obliviousness guides his decision making process somewhat later on, when he gives Mrs. Miller the opportunity to take as much money as *she* deems appropriate.<sup>96</sup> Rather than be forced to impart to Tom a calculative sense that might potentially make him seem miserly in the scene involving Mrs. Miller, Tom quite explicitly delivers himself into the hands

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<sup>95</sup> Rick Bogel has helpfully pointed me to a Latin proverb "Bis dat qui cito dat" or "He gives twice who gives quickly."

<sup>96</sup> I agree with Empson's point that Tom is generous and uncalculating in his monetary charity, but the spirit behind those charitable acts owes more to the rushed character of those transactions than to the value of the gift relative to the amount he possesses. The two views are not in competition, but I wish to emphasize that Tom is thought to be generous in part because of his immediate granting of the gift. William Empson "Tom Jones" in *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Tom Jones*, edited by Martin Battestin. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968. P. 41.

of fate, a decision that in fact places him more deeply into financial debt with Lady Bellaston and which Allworthy later describes as highly “imprudent.” Jones in these scenes demonstrates how deeply implicated financial decisions are in the broader ambiguities of prudence.

As I stated of the moralistic literature on prudence, in *Tom Jones* the line distinguishing moral prudence from immoral prudence requires that a moral framework be appended to it. After Black George secretly recovers and keeps the 500 pound note that Allworthy had given to Jones, he is asked to deliver 16 guineas to him. He considers keeping this as well until his conscience suggests that the keeping of the 500 pounds was merely a “bare concealment of what was found” while keeping the 16 guineas was “an absolute breach of trust.” At this point “Avarice presently treated this with ridicule, called it a distinction without a difference, and absolutely insisted that when once all pretensions of honour and virtue were given up in any one instance, that there was no precedent for resorting to them upon a second occasion.” This is suspect logic, but it is remarkably consistent with Fielding’s sense of character. Fielding nevertheless needs to get some money into Tom’s hands, so he calls on prudence once again to help complete the transaction, though here it goes by a different name:

In short, poor conscience had certainly been defeated in the argument, had not fear stepped in to her assistance, and very strenuously urged that the real distinction between the two actions, did not lie in the different degrees of honour, but of safety; for that the secreting the 500 pounds was a matter of very little hazard; whereas the detaining the sixteen guineas was liable to the utmost danger of discovery.

By this friendly aid of fear, conscience obtained a compleat victory in the mind of Black George, and after making him a few compliments on his honesty, forced him to deliver the money to Jones. (260)

This sense of future security that motivates Black George’s decision underlies Mrs. Western’s comments to Sophia about marrying for a fortune and it is no coincidence

that Fielding here invokes the notion of “hazard,” alluding perhaps to the popular dice game. Prudence means playing a game whose outcome might be determined in advance, certainly not hazard. At the same time, it is fear masquerading as prudence (if masquerading is even the right word here) that makes Black George’s decision seem both immoral and pragmatic, or, indeed, prudent. What is especially interesting about the passage is the way in which the narrator’s relation of Black George’s mental processes draws upon discourses of and follows the logical patterns of moral philosophy and casuistry, the access to which a man in Black George’s station would almost certainly not have had. It is almost as if the narrator wishes to show the mental process by which prudence might be brought into moral considerations, although it is certainly a perversion of morality in the case of Black George, for his concern is not morality, but money and security. This episode demonstrates just how dangerous prudence (read: fear) can be without a supplemental virtue to determine its proper place.

The contradictions apparent in the notion of prudence come to a head at the narrative’s ending. The reactive and impulsive nature of Tom’s generosity makes it impossible for him to fully embrace prudence because it demands a certain consciousness of time, and specifically, future time. Tom’s generosity manifests itself towards end of the novel primarily as a spirit of forgiveness for those who have wronged him, first for Blifil and later for Black George. Allworthy praises Tom’s sagacity concerning the former: it wouldn’t be wise to cast off Blifil in a state of total desperation and abjection as he might do harm to himself and die in a state unfit for a Christian. But when Tom tries to explain Black George’s motives to Allworthy (XVIII. 11), he receives a severe reproof from the latter:

‘Child,’ cries Allworthy, ‘you carry this forgiving temper too far. Such mistaken mercy is not only weakness, but borders on injustice, and is very pernicious to society, as it encourages vice. The dishonesty of this fellow I



might perhaps have pardoned, but never his ingratitude. And give me leave to say, when we suffer any temptation to atone for dishonesty itself, we are as candid and merciful as we ought to be; and so far I confess I have gone; for I have often pitied the fate of a highwayman, when I have been on the grand jury; and have more than once applied to the judge on the behalf of such as have had any mitigating circumstance in their case; but when dishonesty is attended with any blacker crime, such as cruelty, murder, ingratitude, or the like, compassion and forgiveness then become faults. I am convinced the fellow is a villain, and he shall be punished at least as far as I can punish him. (811)

In my mind, this looks to be, in Black George's own words, a distinction without a difference. Why two crimes are worthy of punishment and one is not, why the poverty of Black George or his kindness towards a younger Tom does not count as a mitigating circumstance, why ingratitude is listed as a crime when it is plainly an attitude that bears little resemblance to cruelty, much less murder, are distinctions left undifferentiated. This is not to say that there are no distinctions, or that firmer distinctions could not be drawn, but simply that Fielding, for whatever reason, does not offer them in spite of the fact that they seem to be highly relevant in this case. This is a critical moment because it comes in the midst of Allworthy's sudden realization of Tom's parentage, virtue, and generosity which results in their reconciliation. The somewhat strained nature of Allworthy's argument as to why Black George should be punished when Blifil is more directly responsible for Tom's distresses should be juxtaposed with Allworthy's anxious assertion that he is "*convinced the fellow* [Black George] *is a villain*." Is Allworthy's remark that the gamekeeper's actions are "blacker" than Blifil's life of treachery an anxious hyperbolization of Black George's crime? Does the accidental semantic harmony between the name and the deed excuse him from having to provide a more solid basis for this highly unequal—perhaps downright irrational—distribution of justice? I draw attention to the weaknesses of Allworthy's argument not for any philosophical reason, just as the philosophical ambiguities of Denham's poem are too replete to warrant any serious charge, but to

note how problematic it is for Fielding to reconcile a utilitarian theory of justice—dependent as it is upon a forward looking, socially oriented consciousness (his probabilistic claim that generosity “encourages vice”)—with a theory of virtue that ideally exists independent of consequentialist determinations. This could (should?) be the moment when Tom finally becomes conscious of time and how the actions of the present influence the world of tomorrow, or, in synchronic descriptive spatial terms that conceal the consequentialist epistemology at the root of Allworthy’s ostensibly deontological theory of justice, how the overly indulgent forgiveness of the individual “*borders on injustice, and is very pernicious to society*” (emphasis mine). But Jones’ response to Allworthy’s diatribe suggests otherwise:

This was spoke with so stern a voice, that Jones did not think proper to make any reply: besides, the hour appointed by Mr. Western now drew so near, that he had barely left time to dress himself. Here therefore ended the present dialogue, and Jones retired to another room, where Partridge attended, according to order, with his clothes.

Here we are given a glimpse of a time-conscious Tom, but its function is not so much to reverse our opinion of Tom’s impulsiveness as to forestall objections to Allworthy’s dubious indictment of Black George. If anything, Tom’s unwillingness to respond, though presented as an instance of temporal awareness (“the hour appointed...now drew so near”), acts instead to register a deeper level of moral immediacy. Tom is deprived of a defense of forgiveness in order to underscore his submission to Allworthy’s moral authority. What we know of Tom does not agree with Allworthy’s judgment, but he must nevertheless go along with it in spite of himself. In a way, Tom’s act of submission to Allworthy’s morality of prudence intimates that the two ways of relating to the world and to others are compatible only to the extent that character itself is inherently divided. Fielding presents us in this moment with the same impulsive Tom now subordinate to a irrational morality of prudence (or at least,

not well defended morality of prudence), highlighting at this critical point how fundamentally impossible it is to logically reconcile impulse with prudence in the form of narrative.

Fielding finds himself quite unable to envision a way to reconcile those virtues (and vices) which make Tom lovable (if not always likable) and good with a strong sense of the future, with prudence, primarily because prudence would involve canceling virtues which have by and large become associated with the “Somewhat in his breast,” with his “sanguine” disposition, with his “lively parts,” and indeed with his libidinal, sexual, and “manly” orientation towards not just women, but the entire social field against which Tom always stands apart and within which he occupies a position at the apex of the structuring triangle. Prudence, in the moral writings of Fielding’s predecessors and contemporaries, and the need for it implies both the primacy of happiness (over and against pure virtue, salvation, etc.) as well as the absence of a omniscient authority that gives meaning even to “blackened” virtue. While it is Jones’ project (as Fielding states it) to acquire Prudence, what we ultimately learn from the novel is that he really doesn’t need it, and therefore the reader really doesn’t need it either. If prudence is necessary for happiness, as Fielding so frequently reminds his reader, then why Tom manages to become “the happiest of all human kind” (820) without a sense of it would seem to be a rather difficult problem. The problem is that the virtue of prudence that Fielding’s story (and I use this term quite deliberately here to distinguish what happens to Tom from the novel as a text) stresses is rendered irrelevant by the godlike powers of the narrator. Melvyn New has suggested the presence of such a problem, that “Fielding wants it both ways, a world shaped by God and a world shaped by men: a story that predates and therefore shapes its narration and a story that is directed at every crisis by an intrusive and

concerned narrator.”<sup>97</sup> It may be the case that Fielding “wants” it this way, but put another way, one might begin to read the novel as a tension between two competing moral and ontological claims. At the level of the story, Tom’s adventures mime travails one might experience in the “real world,” travails which demand prudence. At the level of the novel, the narrator seems to make a claim that knowing the whole story of real people in the real world (which is made possible through narrativization) allows “naked Virtue” to flourish regardless of efforts to blacken it. In other words, Fielding’s *novel* would seem to be a pleasing fiction, a resolution to the dire ideas and atheistic potential suggested by the *story’s* demand for prudence. Fielding’s narrator, omniscient (revealing of Tom’s intentions) and omnipotent (capable of structuring the world), is as much an anxious reply to the challenge of prudence as his celebration of prudence in the novel is an anxious reply to his narrator’s supplanting of a strictly Providentialist worldview. Taking the story and the novel together, the author/narrator acts as a prudence principle for Tom, which is to say, that he affords Tom the chance to be imprudent *as a character*. This essentially means that for Fielding, Tom isn’t prudent, but nevertheless enjoys the advantages which prudence is supposed to confer. As for the other characters in the story, they do not have the benefit of the narrator/prudence-principle because they are all a part of a world that is Tom’s and only Tom’s. They are obstacles and events in much the same way as the road on which Tom travels, the bars of his cell, the pocket-book he carries, etc. Characters do not inhabit the world, they are the world, Tom’s world, and this reading shows that the narrator’s purpose with respect to those characters is to merely describe them or direct them. With Tom, the situation is different, for the narrator serves a crucial narrative purpose with respect to his travels. The narrator is made necessary by the fact that there could be no narrative if Tom were prudent, and without the narrator, an

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<sup>97</sup> Melvyn New “‘The Grease of God’: The Form of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction” *PMLA*, Vol. 91, No. 2. March, 1976. PP. 235-244.

imprudent Tom would have no chance of success. It could be argued that the danger in Fielding's strategy is that his reader is given to believe that there is a Providential force protecting the good (which makes prudence unnecessary, and thus the moral goal of the novel is compromised), but the narrator's insistence upon the fact that this is a history compels, if anything, a faith not in the power of God, but in the power of the novel to rescue and rehabilitate those who have been ruined by the machinations of real-world Blifils. The narrator's prudent presence, his ability to make Tom happy without prudence, is not a reflection of something in the real world; at best, we might describe him as Fielding's wish-fulfillment, his fantasy that there is something "out there" to reward the nakedly virtuous. In fact, what the novel constantly stresses, but which can never be fully embraced by the narrator, is that prudence is a necessary evil in a godless world.

Fielding's novel thus comes to seem to either a pessimistic view of the world, or a tiny moment of escape from the duplicity and greed that marks Fielding's modernity. Because the world of the novel is mediated, or rather, constructed, by a narrator whose tendency to redeem Tom by revealing his place in the larger order of things shows precisely the irrelevance of prudence in that same world, characters possessed of it, characters defined by a visual, projecting, speculative, scheming imagination are the ones most likely to suffer. They represent an imposition on the narrator's authority, who acknowledges his powerlessness over the events of the text most openly when relating the exploits of such "prudent" characters. The narrator's famous dictum that he, unlike some "scandalous people," will refrain from searching "into the most secret affairs" or prying "into their closets and cupboards" of his characters follows hot on the heels of a comment concerning young Blifil, who is the novel's emblem of prudence truly run amok (125); and, when Captain Blifil designs to inherit Allworthy's estate, the narrator begins by telling us that:

...first, he exercised much thought in calculating, as well as he could, the exact value of the whole; which calculations he often saw occasion to alter in his own favour; and secondly, and chiefly, he pleased himself with intended alterations in the house and gardens, and in projecting many other schemes, as well for the improvement of the estate, as of the grandeur of the place; for this purpose he applied himself to the studies of architecture and gardening, and read over many books on both these subjects; for these sciences, indeed, employed his whole time, and formed his only amusement. (85)

We are presented with the picture of the quintessentially prudent man: he calculates, he projects, he forms schemes, and not only this, but he studies to improve them, labors to achieve projects whose development are his primary, his only concern. More significantly, he isn't plotting to murder Allworthy, he is simply "looking forward" to his future death, an act as passive as it is vicious. This type of character also represents a determining force in a world beyond its control, in the world of the narrator.

Nevertheless, we find the narrator immediately thereafter remarking that such a mind is beyond comprehension, coyly and playfully excusing himself thus: "very sorry we are, that it is not in our power to present it to our reader, since even the luxury of the present age, I believe, would hardly match it." This simple remark is really just the tip of the iceberg, indicating the presence of not just a narrator who wishes to dissociate himself from the sordid fantasies of the corrupt Captain, but one who knows that at some level this is the type of character who cannot long exist or should not long exist in a world where such prudential scheming is entirely at odds with the moral vision of the narrator and the narrative requirements Fielding sets up through this vision. In the following two pages the narrator further underscores his powerlessness regarding the fate of the Captain by ascribing his death to "the malice of Fortune," simply "an apoplexy," "Death, that inexorable judge," "the Divine Will," and "nature," all of which serves to illustrate how deeply entangled the narrator's revulsion and incompatibility with the lives, events, and ends of prudent characters is with the narrator's claims to knowledge and authority.

### *SUPPLEMENTING PRUDENCE*

On the final page of the text, in the final sentence of the penultimate paragraph, we are told that Jones has acquired prudence:

Allworthy was likewise greatly liberal to Jones on the marriage, and hath omitted no instance of showing his affection to him and his lady, who love him as a father. Whatever in the nature of Jones had a tendency to vice, has been corrected by continual conversation with this good man, and by his union with the lovely and virtuous Sophia. He hath also, by reflexion on his past follies, acquired a discretion and prudence very uncommon in one of his lively parts. (822)

If there is a “conservatively pleasurable narrative path” which is charted in *Tom Jones*, the representation of a moneyed and landed man with a family and a seemingly infinite supply of credit from Allworthy Bank and Trust would seem to be the terminus of that path.<sup>98</sup> The moment is instantly coupled with the remark that Tom has overcome his vicious and imprudent ways, ways which it has been part of the purpose of this chapter to show were intimately bound up with the spirit of impulsive benevolence. In spite of its imprudence, that benevolence manages to “preserve a fair outside” because the narrator ensures that that same virtue is always present for the reader to behold. In this final moment (almost outside the text), Fielding supplements Tom’s virtue with prudence because the character of Tom represents a kind of virtue that cannot be reconciled with prudence in the novel’s story. If there is an improbable artificiality at the novel’s end, it comes when we learn that Tom no longer requires a narrator to “unblacken” his actions; suddenly, at the moment of Tom’s economic boon we hear of his prudential transformation and this has two important consequences, one literary, one ideological.

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<sup>98</sup> Paul Smith “Eastwood Bound” in *Constructing Masculinity*, edited by Marice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson. New York: Routledge, 1995. P. 77-97. Smith is speaking of the films of Clint Eastwood, not *Tom Jones*, but there are some fascinating points of contact between the two.

Without prudence, Fielding may have thought, this novel will simply go on and on, Tom will manage to find himself in an equally disastrous situation within his marriage, in his community, with the law, with the wandering Blifil, or in any number of situations in which foresight plays a pivotal role. Fielding thus places an extraordinary amount of emphasis on Allworthy here, being the man with whom Tom “converses” to gain a degree of prudence and discretion. Allworthy, as many have suggested, is the novel’s moral center, and this seems especially true for the purposes of this argument, for as the prudence literature I surveyed above showed, the necessity for a supplement to prudence, in order to check its potential excesses, a stabilizing “dove” to limit the semantic diffusiveness of the “serpent,” so must Allworthy continue to function as the limiting agent in a newly prudent Tom. The last thing Fielding wants to leave his reader is the sense that Tom’s transformation, artificial though it may be, might be read as a corruption of his goodness. The disappearance, or imminent disappearance, of the narrator, requires that his role be replaced by the “continual conversation with this good man” [Allworthy]. The only thing worse than a scheming Blifil, is a scheming Tom, and given that he is being ushered towards a position of respectability and power within his home community, that threat is especially urgent. So, Fielding in many ways requires Tom to attain Prudence, in order for him (both Fielding and Tom) to “get out of the novel,” both to end its composition and to allow for not just a happy ending, but the reader’s own imagined sense of Tom’s happy (but also virtuous) future.

*Prudence and the Politics of Community in Tom Jones*

It is quite possible to see in the novel’s relation to prudence and foresight, as they deeply implicate the structure and morality of the novel, rather than just as “commentaries” or “themes,” an alternative political understanding of how this sudden



and in many ways contradictory ending might have seemed natural to his readership. A coarse question that sounds like a joke but isn't, goes something like this: How do you make an aristocrat prudent? And the answer: Make him an investor in his country (not much of a punch line). We know that Tom loves his country, as his decision to join the army in support of the ruling monarchy attests, but as Joan Allen Stevenson has pointed out, there is simply not enough evidence to "convict" Fielding of his politics based upon this plotline or references to the '45 alone.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, although Tom seems to embody the virtues associated with the Country, with the aristocracy, with conservatism, or with the Tories—in virtue of the fact that he ends up on a country estate—this is not enough evidence for us to assume that Fielding was writing a paean to any of these ideologies, or that his readers in London would have taken the novel as such, for "even in the years of most embittered factional conflict, there were no simple antitheses between land and trade, or even land and credit;...we are not invited to think in terms of a politics of crudely distinguished interest groups, but of politicians, publicists, and their following maneuvering in a world of common perceptions and symbols and seeking to interpret it for their competitive advantage by means of a common value system" (449).<sup>100</sup> Taking this to be true, we might think of Tom's prudence as an integral moral component of his newly moneyed station. It is noteworthy that the novel's final paragraph stresses the fact that Tom and Sophia are beloved by their community, that all bless the day in which they were married. And I think that one of possible reasons for this stress is that Fielding's ending perhaps appealed to a readership who had come to understand the compatibility of prudential financial management with disinterestedness because of the value producing circuit

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<sup>99</sup> Joan Allen Stevenson "Tom Jones and the Stuarts" *ELH*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Autumn, 1994. PP. 571-595.

<sup>100</sup> J.G.A. Pocock *The Machiavellian Moment* (op. cit. 5).

exemplified by *A Nation, a Family* and more recently articulated by Pocock.<sup>101</sup> Tom's "lively parts" are redirected towards spontaneously rushing to the assistance of the nation, now by way of prudent investment. The end of the novel suggests that prudence is an essential supplement to virtue insofar as the only kind of virtue possible in the world of money and credit relies upon prudential individual investments in the community. In the world of a moneyed man, impulsive action is morally laundered by the sense that our investments are for everyone's good, for the nation. If lively parts gave rise to certain pragmatic triumphs in cases involving direct physical confrontation in the earlier parts of the book, then we might read Tom's acquisition of prudence as simply a pragmatic skill—like his ability to fight or duel—that allows him to implement his impulsive benevolence within the context specified by his position as a man not of means (scraping by, reliant exclusively upon his body and its "virtues" for meaning and authority), but of political and monetary responsibilities.

What appears to be the naturalized result of Tom's improbable union of lively parts and prudence is not a simple contradiction, whereby "lively parts" play the role of the hysterical remainder of a paradigm in which the male body returns to oppose the conservative and conventionalizing forces of the law, but a decided sublimation of those lively parts into the financial framework that valorizes prudential management. Fielding's closing image, of a masculine prudential subject (quite unlike the sexless Blifil or the novel's "prudent" female characters) suggests that the very bodily contours that made Tom loveable might, within his newly propertied subject position, make him equally profitable, to himself and his own national economy.

*Tom Jones* sets the stage, perhaps unconsciously, for a vision of masculinity that depends not upon the physical superiority of the solitary man, but upon the idea that a man could be defined by his financial relation to the world. Because Tom has

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid. On the shifting grounds of virtue in the commercial and credit society of Fielding's day, see esp. 425, 439-440, 449, 456.

become responsible to Sophia, his community, and Allworthy—his self-interest, his national interest, and his market interest—the reader is capable of drawing upon a myth of virtue, grounded in the idea that masculine prudence means investing in the name of your country. Rather than settling for the triumph of impulse or the sacrifice of aristocratic benevolence, Fielding instead offers a law of the market, whose authority derives from the fact that its participants are men of lively parts.

## Chapter 4

### “Wand’ring in the Wilds of future Being”:

#### Samuel Johnson, Speculation, and the Sublime Object of Temporality

T.S. Eliot defined rhetoric as any “adornment or inflation of speech which is not done for a particular effect but for a general impressiveness,” and Samuel Johnson’s proclivity to adorn and inflate his critique of future-thinking might very well evidence this claim.<sup>102</sup> In its insistence upon the individual author and his or her intentions behind particular strategies of representation, Eliot’s definition omits consideration of rhetoric as it relates to a reader (or audience member). For rhetoric may not be done *for* a particular effect, but it nevertheless *has* effects. While Johnson may have deployed his adornment in the name of “a general impressiveness,” it is also true that the tropes Johnson used to impress upon his audience the dangers of reveling in schemes of future felicity collectively produce a discourse that both subverts and exceeds its creator’s design. In Act I, scene ii of Samuel Johnson’s earliest major work, *Irene* (composed ca. 1735-1737, first staged February 1749), Cali Bassa, the duplicitous counselor of Mahomet, approaches Demetrius, his Greek confidant, with a call to arms by way of a request for his attention:

Now summon all thy Soul, illustrious Christian!  
Awake each Faculty that sleeps within thee,  
The Courtier’s Policy, the Sage’s Firmness,  
The Warrior’s Ardour, and the Patriot’s Zeal;  
If chasing past Events with vain Pursuit,  
Or wand’ring in the Wilds of future Being,<sup>103</sup>  
A single Thought now rove, recall it home.  
(1.2.1-7)

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<sup>102</sup> T.S. Eliot “Rhetoric and Poetic Drama” in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*. London: Methuen, 1960. P. 151.

<sup>103</sup> Samuel Johnson *Irene* in *The Poems of Samuel Johnson*, ed. David Nichol Smith and Edward L. McAdam, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974. P. 288.

The speech is made by one co-conspirator to another who wishes to design a plot to unseat the Emperor. Even for those unfamiliar with this now largely dismissed tragedy, the language of the passage may sound typically Johnsonian. Present in this utterance is the familiar apostrophic demand to be heard (Cf. the opening lines of *Rasselas*: “Ye who...expect that...the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow; attend to the history of Rasselas prince of Abissinia.”), a selection of abstractions and types invoked to communicate a simple idea, and an admonition to check the unruly activities of one’s mind. Although it isn’t quite clear from the syntax which “faculties” are required for the formation of the plan and which relate to the plan’s implementation, it is implied in the series of substantive modifiers (Courtier, Sage, Warrior, Patriot) that those faculties that will be essential in bringing the scheme to fruition are also a part of the process of summoning the soul to attention. To the extent that Demetrius is a Courtier, he will judiciously advise on policy; as a Sage, he will bring moral wisdom and experience to the council; as a Warrior, he will directly engage the enemy; and, as a Patriot, he will enthusiastically promote the cause for which he stands. The struggle for political revolution—the contextualizing subject of Johnson’s tragedy—begins with the self, at “home,” conquering unruly psychic energies that uncannily metaphorize the political foe against which Cali Bassa and Demetrius have pitted themselves. But the figures of Courtier, Warrior, and Sage seem strangely outdated for a mid-eighteenth century political drama, part of a feudal or at least pre-bureaucratic political regime, while the word “Patriot” had recently been co-opted by those who defined themselves in opposition to Walpole and a modernity characterized by ambition, professionalization, and avarice. Johnson’s engagements with contemporary disputes about the various faculties suggest a certain timeliness but his sense of the properly ordered mental state owes its metaphorical embodiment to an increasingly antiquated form of political organization.

Similarly, in Chapter XLIV of *Rasselas*, “The Dangerous Prevalence of Imagination,” Imlac famously avers that there “is no man whose imagination does not sometimes predominate over his reason, who can regulate his attention wholly by his will, and whose ideas will come and go at his command. No man will be found in whose mind airy notions do not sometimes tyrannise, and force him to hope or fear beyond the limits of sober probability. All power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity; but while this power is such as we can controll and repress, it is not visible to others, nor considered as any depravation of the mental faculties: it is not pronounced madness but when it comes ungovernable, and apparently influences speech or action.”<sup>104</sup> This tyranny specifically manifests itself in the form of psycho-temporal escapes for a subject who then “expatiates in boundless futurity, and culls from all imaginable conditions that which for the present moment he should most desire...and confers upon his pride unattainable dominion.” These passages seem to evidence Wimsatt’s claim that Johnson deployed the language of corpuscular philosophy, displaying in his essays “the most concentrated use in English literature of mechanical imagery turned inward to the analysis of the soul.”<sup>105</sup> But more than stylistically reflecting a world where one “was surrounded by unseen corpuscular forces which *operated* upon one’s nerves” (Wimsatt’s emphasis),<sup>106</sup> Johnson figures this confrontation between the sober self and imagined futurity as an essentially violent one, selecting such terms as domination, regulation, commandment, tyranny, force, power, repression, governance, and dominion to analogize psychic and political dynamics. If, as Wimsatt shows in his study, Johnson was compelled to represent relations between the mind and the world in terms of the corpuscular philosophy

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<sup>104</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*, ed. Gwin J. Kolb, Volume 16, *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, gen. ed. John H. Muddendordf. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990. PP. 150-51.

<sup>105</sup> W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. *Philosophic Words: A Study of Style and Meaning in the Rambler and Dictionary of Samuel Johnson*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948. P. 104.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

advanced by Locke and others, it is also true that the relatively value neutral terminology of that discourse—such as “operate,” “impress,” “affect,” and “agency”—was incommensurate with Johnson’s estimation of the gravity of this particular mental conflict. For his political language draws not so much from the budding discourses of political rationalism and contract theory associated with Locke’s *Second Treatise* but from the darker and indeed starker visions of the Machiavelli of *The Prince* and, of course, Thomas Hobbes. In both passages, Johnson denigrates the mental confrontation with futurity by means of a recourse to political rhetoric in which the subject’s duty is to marshal the energies of an heroic spirit for an assault on psychic deviance and the phantasmatic. More than a capricious moment of metaphorical relation or a variation on the discursive conventions of corpuscular epistemology, this dramatic and resonant recourse to political and heroic tropes constitutes the very fabric of Johnson’s critique of futurity.

To draw out the metaphor, Imlac sees in the ascendancy of Imagination over the proper authority a mental “state” without proper foundation: it is “airy.” This faculty is implicitly contrasted with Reason, whose powers of direction and governance are grounded and sober, stable and regular. Imlac introduces the above opinion by stipulating that “if we speak with rigorous exactness, no human mind is in its right state,” a statement that shows Johnson making the most of the pun on mental and political states. The necessary failure of the human mind to properly repress the imagination can be palliated insofar as it can avoid being “pronounced madness,” that is, it can avoid being recognized by others as a failure to maintain “control.” Johnson’s two “states” are not those properly managed and those improperly managed, but those to which the appellation “madness” applies and those to which it does not apply. The propriety of this application rests, however, not upon the mental state per se, but upon its outward manifestations. The conflict of the faculties is

situated as much outside of the subject as within, which accords to the Other the authority to decide exactly what state one is in. What Johnson tells us in both the passage from *Rasselas* as well as the dialogue from *Irene*, works written almost twenty-five years apart, is that the human mind is subject to “climatericks” as he calls them in *Rambler* 151, that necessitate an on-going inner struggle between a desire to remain tied to the present and the temptation of losing itself in futurity. With no hope of total victory, the best that can be hoped for is the appearance of sanity. Nevertheless, that appearance can only be effected through a violent suppression of counter-rational forces constantly aiming at the dissolution of the mental state.

Given the way that Johnson’s moral psychology in these passages seems to be attacking that “projecting Humour” that Defoe championed as the solution to England’s many problems, we can see the merit behind those critics who have positioned Johnson next to the rear-guard, the “aristocratic ideology,” and Toryism. But as more recent studies have shown, assessing Johnson’s politics is a much more complicated matter, primarily because political allegiance as we understand it today depends on the pre-existence of an oppositional party system that was only coming into being in Johnson’s day.<sup>107</sup> In fact, partisanship in the eighteenth-century had an *ad hoc* and situational nature that renders political categorization historiographically problematic. Nevertheless, critics continue to wage the battle of Johnson’s politics as though all that is needed is a little more information, a more subtle reading of Johnson’s works, greater consideration of his religious views, perhaps an impossible glimpse at some of the papers he burned in his final years. What is interesting about

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<sup>107</sup> The theories concerning Johnson’s alleged Toryism extend back at least as far as Boswell, but the idea gained its modern strength in popular and critical academic discussion from Macaulay’s infamous review of John Croker’s edition of Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*. For responses to Macaulay, see Donald Greene *The Politics of Samuel Johnson*, Second Edition. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990. More recently, John Cannon has argued that far from being a reactionary conservative, Johnson was “if anything ahead of his day” on matters concerning education, prisons and slavery. *Samuel Johnson and the Politics of Hanoverian England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. While Greene’s study is quite specifically biographical, drawing on contemporaneous political writings for support, Cannon considers various aspects of Johnson’s thought in relation to larger patterns of ideas in the period.



many such studies is that they re-read Johnson's work for the purposes of clarifying his thought, re-readings which are then used as evidence for larger claims about the politics (or the culture, or the literature, or the society, or the state) of his time (Sarah Jordan's work on Johnson and idleness being a very recent example).<sup>108</sup> For all of the merit in each of these readings, what they miss is the simple fact that the necessity for a more refined understanding of Johnson today suggests the absence of such an understanding in the past. Hence, the claim to novelty of interpretation is strictly at odds with the broader claims about his readership and the culture within which his work played such an important role. If what is of the greatest importance is establishing what Johnson's ideas were in the eyes of his contemporaries, or in ascertaining the transformative effects of his work on culture, then it makes little sense to proffer subtle and sophisticated readings that reveal Johnson to have been a Whig in Tory clothing, to have adored the novel form, to have been a religious skeptic, to have hated the poor, or, as one critic has suggested, to have been a deconstructionist. It would make more sense to carefully sift the responses to Johnson and see what people made of him at the time, a direction that many savvy Johnsonians have taken. For all of the abuse which has been put upon Macaulay's classic stylization of Johnson as an atavistic Tory, an estate shy of incarnating Squire Western, it is helpful to note that Macaulay was less interested in closely reading Johnson's text than he was in situating him within frameworks that Johnson and his contemporaries themselves had helped to naturalize ("men who look forward"/"men who look backward," Whigs/Tories, city/country, land/capital, speculator/laborer).

The desire amongst critics to write more or less biographical biographies of Johnson (and his "ideas") can no doubt be attributed to the extraordinary *biographical*

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<sup>108</sup> Sarah Jordan *The Anxieties of Idleness: Idleness in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003. As a concatenation of Johnsonian musings upon idleness, Jordan's work is comprehensive and useful. It is the absence of readerly skepticism and even interpretation that I find problematic in her work. After reading her chapter on Johnson, one asks why they did not simply spend that time reading Johnson's own work.

*impulse* generated by Boswell, Hester Thrale, Macaulay and their many, many followers. Although this essay speaks to certain intellectual historical aspects of Johnson's thought, it is not a primary concern for me. I am interested in evaluating Johnson's rhetorical construction of the category of the future with an eye to its potential effects on his reader rather than the deliberate strategies of the author. Rather than suggest that in fact Johnson admired those who lost themselves in flights of imaginary fancy (which would involve reading against the grain to such an extent as to call the very existence of a grain into serious question), I am interested in the way his ostensible project of denigrating "futurity" is affected by its rhetorical embodiment. It is clear what Johnson thought about futurity and speculation, for he hardly ever wavers from the position of Imlac. What is less clear, however, is how his reliance upon the kinds of figures and imagery discussed above in his depiction of futurity inflected those views and how that inflection is then played out in history. In short, how can we account for the astonishing popularity of his writings, writings that categorically refute speculative activity time and time again, given that an Enlightenment ethos of speculative utopianism and bourgeois projecting was in full swing? Nuanced readings of unpublished materials or subtle manipulations of Johnson's major works may explain how he accounted for this paradox to himself, but they cannot explain his role in the world.

Johnson understood that his highly metaphorical language served the important communicative function of elucidating the machinations of the more mysterious and opaque domain of mental phenomena. That language, however, for all of its dependence upon familiar tropes and relationships can itself be seen as aiding in the formation and the legitimation of a new kind of subjectivity that could be described as political in nature. At stake in this conflict of the faculties is more than just a psychology or sociology, but a relatively developed politics in which values associated

with the *vita activa* and the Protestant ethic figure prominently. As shown by the quotations from Cali Bassa and Imlac, the triumph of the Reason over the Imagination entails the replacement of fanciful notions about the future with a grounded and sober investment in the present—even if the nature of that present in this case is to form a plan for the morrow. That investment alternately makes use of aristocratic (or, to be more generous, pre-modern) *and* bourgeois values. Particular to Johnson's valorization of industry, application, diligence and sobriety—values which become increasingly associated with an upwardly mobile middle-class—is a discursive countercurrent that emerges out of Johnson's openly hostile literary engagements with the ideologically complementary acts of looking forward, expecting, anticipating and planning (the combined terms of Defoe's "projecting Humour" and Fielding's "prudence"). Seeing in these anticipatory activities the related and inevitable irruption of "dangerous" imagination, Johnson can at best position himself ambivalently with respect to the historical onset and ideological triumph of the self-determining individual. That ambivalence, defined as it is by competing depictions of the future as unreal ("fantastic" or "imaginary") on the one hand, and dangerous on the other ("wild," "dark," "tyrannizing," and "powerful"), can be understood as the motor force behind Johnson's narratives. Those narratives, I show in the final portion of this chapter, secure ample ideological ground for the "wand'ring" individual in part by negating the utopian projects of the working class, projects that seem to be dangerous precisely because they are incompletely worked out, vague, uncertain, and incoherent.

Johnson is similarly conflicted about the opposition between stability on the one hand and wandering on the other, an ambivalence best evidenced by his frequent turn to spatial metaphors for the representation of psycho-temporal escapes, hence "Wand'ring in the Wilds of future Being." Basing an evaluation exclusively on such *Ramblers* as that involving the castigation of Cowley's disposition to wander, we

might conclude that Johnson prefers fixity and application, but as the story of *Rasselas* plainly demonstrates, wandering becomes a necessity when that fixity slips over into stasis and satiety. In these attempts to negotiate between presentism and expectation, fixity and wandering, Johnson is complicit in the process of modernization to the extent that he clears space for a distinctly modern subject, although not just through his occasional valorizations of what are traditionally understood as bourgeois values.<sup>109</sup> For if Johnson's advocacy was simply oscillating between dichotomous poles due to the inherent merits of each, then we could stop with an exposition of his more progressive moments, concluding as many have that Johnson was full of contradictions, skeptical, undecided, or, as mentioned above, a proto-deconstructionist. To take the last as an example of the kind of resistant or revisionist interpretations that mark many recent studies, Steven Lynn identifies in Johnson's writings a Derridean logic of supplementarity wherein subjective indecision resulting from the confrontation with a tragically polarized moral opposition necessitates a strategic leap of epistemological faith.<sup>110</sup> The truth of this claim rests however upon his study's systematic omission of the testaments to absolute moral and religious truths that are liberally peppered throughout Johnson's writings (not the least of which are the sermons and prayers). So while there may be evidence for all of these studies that attempt to highlight Johnson's ambivalent relationship to uncertainties and transformations of social and economic systems, what is of particular interest to me are the ways Johnson's rhetoric militates against his attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the forward-looking projector. In the passage from *Rasselas* noted above, the language of political administration and repression perhaps chosen by

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<sup>109</sup> This has been the objective of two recent articles. See Nicholas Hudson "Johnson, the 1750s, and the Rise of the Middle Class" and Aaron Stavisky "Samuel Johnson and the Market Economy" *Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual*, Vol. 13, ed. Paul J. Korshin and Jack Lynch. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 2002.

<sup>110</sup> Steven Lynn, *Samuel Johnson after Deconstruction: Rhetoric and The Rambler*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992.

Johnson for its rhetorical force or communicative value simultaneously positions the subject vis-à-vis the fanciful, the imaginary, and the uncertain in a conflictual and combative relation. To the extent that this conflict necessitates violence and danger (the “dangerous” prevalence of imagination), it entails a certain amount of risk. The future, I hope to show, is no empty or hollow category for Johnson, as much as he wished to stress its ephemerality and fictiveness. Unable to imagine (or simply doubting the existence of) a contained or self-regulating speculative disposition, Johnson categorically hypostatizes the engagement with futurity by deploying tropes associated with the sublime. Through a reliance upon the language of sublimity, chaos, and violence in his representations of the uncertain and dangerous future, Johnson re-inscribes the identity of the forward-looking bourgeoisie—and all that Weber associated with that class—with the stuff of romance: individualism, figured as the subject desirous of encounters with futurity, becomes heroic. In attacking future-thinking, Johnson makes the future palpably ominous and, in so doing, becomes an important transitional figure in the history of bourgeois speculation and the progressive ideology. Johnson is able to mount a criticism of speculation only through narratives of adventurous folly that nevertheless point to an essential value in adventurous behavior. In this chapter I intend to first read Johnson’s rhetoric of futurity as it appears in non-narrative contexts to both explicate Johnson’s views and to point to some patterns that will help in clarifying his rhetorical dependence upon the language of the sublime. I then show how this interdependence of language plays an active role in the development of two Johnsonian narratives, one taken from *The Rambler* and the other being *Rasselas*. In the first of these two narratives, I show how Johnson, in his narrative formula, champions future-thinking even when his narrative’s “message” or “moral” seems to condemn it. By then taking the problem of futurity as central to Johnson’s understanding of narrative form, I try to account for the

notoriously disruptive conclusion of *Rasselas* in which nothing is concluded. Rather than try to iron out this textual wrinkle, I take this radical departure from the novel's emphasis upon the "choice of life" as a symptom of a more profound anxiety about the place of adventure, risk taking, and bourgeois speculation in Johnson's day. Hopefully this method is visibly distinct from those readings which seek to "clarify" Johnson's thought by simply concatenating evidence that points to opinions or patterns of thought that are at odds with prevailing ideas concerning his philosophy, his piety, or his politics.

*Johnson and Problems of Speculative Certainty*

Although it is not my intent to provide yet another biographical account, it is helpful to note that Johnson's paeans to stability and application were songs that he himself refused to hear. His legendary departure from Lichfield with David Garrick to see what opportunities London might offer would serve as a textbook example of eighteenth century England's newest man: the merchant adventurer. Obviously, Horatio Alger has antecedents prior to Samuel Johnson, but few fit the pattern so nicely as Boswell's impecunious but frugal literary aspirant off to the big city in hopes of making a living. Boswell actually calls Johnson at this point "an adventurer in literature," and the appellation seems fair, for eventually he would be the man behind *The Adventurer*. Earlier, Johnson had ventured in the world of pedagogy, forming the doomed Lichfield school, which had only three students in its short unhappy life. The experience must have been overwhelmingly depressing for someone who had seen his own father's venture—a publishing business—rise and fall to a deplorable condition in his lifetime. Walter Bate has suggested that Johnson's perception of his father's imaginary escapes from the impending financial catastrophe is connected to a lifelong advocacy of sober reality, but one then wonders how to account for Johnson's numerous speculative ventures, ventures that in every case began as imaginative

escapades generated by a dissatisfaction with sober reality.<sup>111</sup> It is unsurprising that it is the figure of the author and authorial ambition that so frequently becomes the emblem for speculative failure. The anti-hero of “To a Young Author,” the scholar from “The Vanity of Human Wishes,” and the aspiring legions of Milton-wannabes in “The New Prologue to *Comus*”—not to mention the various incarnations of this personage in the essays—all seem to carry the weight of a world in which every thought finds itself lost in futurity. Whereas in Pope the figure of the futilely ambitious author is traced back to its source in the essential evil and dullness of print culture (the homogenizing and bland world of hack writers), the Johnsonian “Author” emerges from the interstices of the paradox apparent in the notion of the “perfect example.” The paradox, of course, is that an example can never be truly “perfect” lest it come to be so self-identical as to resist its application to what it is not, so emblematic of a phenomenon that it attains to the status of an inassimilable singularity. And yet for Johnson, the Author was more of a speculator than any other being (a “perfect” instance) and at the same time only a sub-category of the Speculator who was, it turns out, pretty much everyone (an “example” drawn from the multitudes). Johnson’s later literary projects such as *The Dictionary*, *The Rambler*, *The Idler*, *The Lives of the Poets*, and as aforementioned, *The Adventurer*, attest to a keen awareness of the world’s vicissitudes, symbolized by variable publishers, unreliable patrons, and fickle readerships. Simultaneously, however, these symbols themselves function in Johnson’s writings frequently as tropes for broader patterns of society and culture. Within these terms, Johnson is the “perfect example” of the Author.

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<sup>111</sup> Walter Jackson Bate *Samuel Johnson*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977. PP. 120-21. The escape to which I refer here was Michael Johnson’s bizarre tendency to lock the front door of his Lichfield bookshop at closing time when the edifice’s crumbling rear wall made it possible for anyone to enter from the back. Specifically, Johnson saw this escape as an instance of the “prevalence of the imagination.” Bate pairs this observation made by Johnson with another comment concerning his belief that he inherited from his father a certain kind of reveling madness.

Even when masquerading as *The Adventurer*, Johnson was always aware of the radical contingency of the external world. In *Adventurer* 45 (April 10, 1753), he mocks those projectors that Defoe so adored (if only as a class):

It is well known, that many things appear plausible in speculation, which can never be reduced to practice; and that of the numberless projects that have flattered mankind with theoretical speciousness, few have served any other purpose than to shew the ingenuity of their contrivers. A voyage to the moon, however romantic and absurd the scheme may now appear, since the properties of air have been better understood, seemed highly probably to many of the aspiring wits in the last century, who began to doat upon their glossy plumes, and fluttered with impatience for the hour of their departure.<sup>112</sup>

Johnson's choice to represent the folly of speculation by way of an example concerning travel is rather interesting given the revolutionary navigational accomplishments that had relatively recently been performed by European explorers. Johnson hardly shows the signs of an adventurer in such a categorical refutation of speculation as that which appears in the first sentence of the above quotation. Although the hyperbolic nature of the moon example suggests at least the possibility of success for more modest speculative ventures, we are left in some doubt about even more modest proposals given that the essay goes on to generally indict "fallacies which only experience can detect,...which by a captivating shew of indubitable certainty, are perpetually gaining upon the human mind; and, which, though every trial ends in disappointment, obtain credit as the sense of miscarriage wears gradually away, [and whose advocates then] persuade us to try again what we have tried already, and expose us by the same failure to double vexation." Johnson's involution of obstacles, failures, and deceptions into an accumulative prose style performs the intended message: projects cannot spring from the mind of the speculator fully-formed and perfected; they must endure multiple trials, hearings, and revisions. And then they

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<sup>112</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The Adventurer* in *The Idler and The Adventurer*, ed. W.J. Bate, John M. Bullitt and L.F. Powell, Volume 2, *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, gen. ed. Allen T. Hazen, et. al. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963. P. 357.



fail. This happens “perpetually,” and, in spite of a total lack of merit, nevertheless acquire strength. It might be argued that in his subsequent attack on “confederated strength” in this essay Johnson carves room for individual speculation, but all that one can reasonably conclude is that projects involving the masses are as fraught as those engineered by individuals.

Johnson similarly builds around the opposition between certainty and future contingency in his essay upon the Corn Laws (1766): “The change of old establishments is always an evil and that therefore where the good of the change is not certain and constant, it is better to preserve that reverence and that confidence which is produced by consistency of conduct and permanency of laws.”<sup>113</sup> Johnson is here putting forward a view which he commonly espoused, such as in “A Debate between the Committee and Oliver Cromwell” (1741) when he writes that “[long] prescription is a sufficient argument in favour of a practice against which nothing can be alleged” and that “new methods of administration may produce evils which the most prudent cannot foresee” (Yale 85-6, 82)<sup>114</sup>; or in “Plan of a Dictionary” (1747) when he warns that “[all] change is of itself an evil, which ought not to be hazarded but for evident advantage”; or when, with a modified emphasis, observes in the “Preface” to the *Dictionary* that there “is in constancy and stability a general and lasting advantage, which will always overbalance the slow improvements of gradual correction.”<sup>115</sup> It is important to note that Johnson’s essay on corn markets is uniquely important given recent historical research indicating the connections between seventeenth-century polemics directed against commodity speculation and eighteenth-century polemics

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<sup>113</sup> Samuel Johnson, “Considerations on Corn” in *Political Writings*, ed. Donald Greene, Vol. 10, *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, gen. ed. John Middendorf, et. al. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977. PP. 301-312.

<sup>114</sup> Samuel Johnson “The Debate between the Committee and Oliver Cromwell” in *Political Writings*, op. cit. 113. PP. 74-110.

<sup>115</sup> Samuel Johnson “Preface to a Dictionary of the English Language” in *Samuel Johnson: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Frank Brady and W. K. Wimsatt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. PP. 277-99.

directed against newer forms of securities speculation.<sup>116</sup> It is unsurprising that Johnson's preoccupation with predictive certainty sounds so loudly in this essay given that its author is able to draw on almost a hundred years of anti-speculative critical and rhetorical tradition. Johnson's penultimate paragraph in the essay represents an interesting negotiation between this specific tradition and speculation more broadly understood as an attempt at gaining a purchase on the uncertain future:

It is difficult to discover any reason why that Bounty which has produced so much good and has hitherto produced no harm should be withdrawn or abated. It is possible that if it were reduced lower, it would still be the motive of agriculture and the cause of plenty; but why we should desert experience for conjecture, and exchange a known for a possible good will not easily be discovered. If by a ballance of probabilities, in which a grain of dust may turn the scale, or by a curious scheme of calculation of which if one postulate in a thousand be erroneous, the deduction which promises plenty may end in Famine, if by a specious mode of uncertain ratiocination, the critical point at which the bounty should stop might seem to be discovered, I shall still continue to believe that it is more safe to trust what we have already tried and cannot but think Bread a product of too much importance to be made the sport of subtilty, and the topick of hypothetical disputation. ("Considerations" 311-312)

The language of predictive certainty resounds through this passage in words and phrases like "desert experience for conjecture," "curious scheme of calculation," "exchange a known for a possible good," "specious mode of uncertain ratiocination," (an excess that reveals a great deal given that the period used "ratiocination" to sometimes connote "forced or artificial reasoning"; hence, the doubly redundant "a *specious* mode of uncertain *forced* reasoning"), "safe," "trust," and "already tried." The "grain of dust" and the one "erroneous...postulate in a thousand" can be read on the one hand as a piece of evidence used for making judgments; but, in the context of causal certainty and contingency that is the focus of the final pages of Johnson's essay, it is equally possible to read it as a hyperbolically diminutive variation on Hume's "something" (of his maxim that "something is sure to happen" to upset predictive

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<sup>116</sup> For more on this see Stuart Banner *Anglo-American Securities Regulation: Cultural and Political Roots, 1690-1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. PP. 14-18.

judgments). This places Johnson too at radical odds with the speculative confidence implicit in Defoe's argumentative venture into commercial futurity, in which even the smallest things have a *discernible* role in the determination of a system: "[t]rade, like all nature most obsequiously obeys the great law of cause and consequence; and this is the occasion why even all the greatest articles of trade follow, and as it were pay homage to this seemingly minute and inconsiderable thing, the poor man's labour."<sup>117</sup>

In contrast to this optimism, at each point of Johnson's argument there is a rather conspicuous coupling of axiomatic propositional claims evincing the traits of skepticism with the materiality of corn and hunger. Johnson applies his skeptical framework to this situation with a facility that implies an allegiance to this outlook deriving precisely from its conceptual openness. In this respect, the essay is as much about corn as it is about speculation itself.

We see Johnson frequently employ the same language that he would later use in his essay on the Corn Laws. In *Rambler* 4 Johnson writes that "the best Examples only should be exhibited; and that which is likely to operate so strongly, should not be mischievous or uncertain in its Effects."<sup>118</sup> Nicholas Hudson has argued that Johnson's famous proclamation that "men have no business with consequences" is the logical outgrowth of his religious thinking, but given passages such as this, one must wonder if it isn't rather the "grain of dust" which subverts attempts at foreknowledge that led him to make such a proclamation; it isn't that man shouldn't concern himself with the future, but that prediction is rendered impossible by such "grains of dust."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Daniel Defoe "Giving Alms No Charity" (1724) in *The True-Born Englishman and Other Writings*, ed. P.N. Furbank and W.R. Owens. London: Penguin Books, 1997. P. 236.

<sup>118</sup> Samuel Johnson *The Rambler*, ed. W.J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss, vol. 3, *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, gen. ed. John Middendorf. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969. P. 22.

<sup>119</sup> Nicholas Hudson "Johnson's Moral Doctrine: 'Christian Epicureanism'" *Samuel Johnson and Eighteenth-century Thought*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988. PP. 66-84. For all of his brilliant writing on Samuel Johnson, I strongly disagree with Hudson's argument in this case. I cannot develop my position here but essentially Hudson rather violently yokes these two terms together in an attempt to provide a unified account of two radically different and competing aspects of Johnson's thought. Rather than imagining Johnson as an Epicurean constrained by Christianity, it is more useful I think to see Johnson drawing on two discrete ethical traditions at different times and to very different ends.

In Johnson's complex system, grains of dust are like wings of butterflies on one side of the world that lead to storms in the other. The simile is appropriate because of the enormity of the difference of these two events in terms of magnitude (grains and wings, famines and storms). And the broadness of that analogy (invoked in hundreds of various and often inappropriate instances) functions in much the same way that Johnson's open paradigm does: as a featureless skeleton in search of a fleshy context.

### *Johnson and the Temporal Sublime*

I have provided these quotations primarily to show the reader that Johnson factored the problem of futurity into almost every moral, social, political and cultural event upon which he deigned to write. This is an aspect of Johnson's thought often noted, but rarely discussed in detail. It is one thing to note that Johnson was uncertain about the future and another to study the rhetorical excesses that punctuate these opinions. Critics have noted the importance of this "skeleton" to Johnson's beliefs, making more or less of the "flesh" in which it comes wrapped, but what is of note for this study of Johnson is the overlap of that skeleton's various manifestations (its "flesh-es") and the contemporaneous rhetoric of sublimity. For Johnson, a critique of futurity always entails some reflection on greatness, the infinite, the catastrophic or the violent. We have already seen two examples of this in his mockery of navigational accomplishment and in his intimations of devastation resulting from a policy change so obviously less ominous than Johnson imagines. In the former case, Johnson resists employing a modest example of speculative presumption in favor of the hyperbolic lunar voyage; regarding the latter, a partial grain subsidy intended to prevent a decline in domestic grain production in Johnson's hands becomes the occasion for famine. In the former example, Johnson presents the reader with a sense of speculation in which human and physical bounds play no part, in which the irrationally committed speculator undergoes a kind of cognitive dissonance in the face imminent failure. The

speculative act is depicted as somehow beyond reason and therefore reaches as far as it possibly can, even if that means the moon. In the case of the corn subsidy, Johnson describes the way the world itself, reality, actual futurity, operates to bring about devastation. Here, a decidedly more modest instance of speculation, a corn subsidy, is rendered impotent in a world of contingency so fragile that the tiniest fluctuation ends peremptorily in mass death. In the writing of Johnson, speculation is doubly dangerous. Even when one resists being seduced by futurity into forming impossible schemes, the speculator must face the almost pre-ordained doom of more realistic projects. In Johnson, there is no rational approach to the future because both the psychic proclivity to spread towards infinity and the infinitely variable contingencies of the objective world negate the limits that make rationality possible.

Johnson was rarely able to limit his critique of future-thinking to the everyday spheres of human life, and sometimes even the span of life is not enough to convey the gravity of the futurist's error. We will recall the "presumptuous Author posting down in triumph to futurity" from *Rambler 2* who is allegorically denied this fate by an omnipotent scythe-wielding Time. That particular allegorical turn replaces the concrete imagery of libraries full of unread books (the essay's opening image) with a wild and frankly paranoid sense of an all-devouring agent lurking simultaneously in and above the human world. In a similarly apocalyptic moment in *Rambler 3*, Johnson casually compares the futility of everyday speculative behavior with a farmer who desires a "harvest which *blights* may intercept, which *inundations* may sweep away, or which *death* or *calamity* may hinder him from reaping" (emphasis mine). In *Rambler 182*, the moment thoughts of chance *begin* to encroach upon the mind, life "generally ends in wretchedness and want." There are many examples of Johnson moving from a figure interested in temporally uncertain events suddenly ending catastrophically, but at this point I wish to draw some further connections between Johnson's

representation of futurity and the discourse of the sublime on the way to showing how this rhetorical interplay affects the identity of the bourgeois speculator.

Although the paucity of critical attention paid to the role—or lack thereof—of the sublime in Johnson’s writings is reason enough to warrant this comparison, there are some truly extraordinary similarities between the discourse of the sublime in the 1735-1756 period<sup>120</sup> and Johnson’s roughly contemporaneous writings on futurity and temporal uncertainty. In order to proceed with this analysis, it is first necessary to briefly rehearse some of the essential components of the sublime. I have chosen to focus on Edmund Burke’s essay on the sublime for two reasons. First, moving in the same circles as Burke for a time, Johnson was familiar with the sublime as he understood it, eventually declaring the treatise “an example of true criticism.” This begins to account for some of the remarkable parallels between Burke’s *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* and Johnson’s life-long critique. Burke specifies that in encounters with the sublime, “the imagination is entertained with the promise of something more, and does not acquiesce in the present object of the sense.”<sup>121</sup> Johnson had pictured the subjective engagement with futurity in a provocatively similar manner: “the mind of man is never satisfied with the objects immediately before it, but is always breaking away from the present moment, and losing itself in schemes of future felicity” (*Rambler* 2). In both passages the object fails to deliver on a promise of fulfillment, which leads the mind on to greater scenes and ideas, although one could argue that for Burke there is an absence of desire while

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<sup>120</sup> These years are marked by Samuel Monk as those during which a relative silence concerning the sublime should *not* be taken as an indication of its lack of importance to thinkers of this period. It was during these years that “Longinus attained his greatest popularity, and consequently that the sublime was prominent in the minds of critics.” *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-century England*. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1935. P. 63. It was during this period that Johnson developed from an upstart dramatist (*Irene*) in London to *The Rambler*, a persona that Wimsatt has suggested was the literary persona he would possess until his death. *Philosophic Words* (op. cit. 105).

<sup>121</sup> Edmund Burke “Sect. XI. Infinity in pleasing Objects” in *Philosophical Inquiries into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1<sup>st</sup> edition 1757, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1759), ed. David Womersly. London: Penguin Books, 1998. P. 118. All subsequent citations are from this edition.

Johnson's text hinges upon the presence of a new object that can be desired. But as I have shown above, those "schemes of future felicity" are themselves as indeterminate and expansive as the Burkean infinite. Just as Burke's imagination is "entertained with the promise of something more," so is the speculative disposition in Johnson characterized by its inability to remain focused on a single attainable object. More importantly, I am not positing that there is an identity between the *experiences* of the sublime and the futuristic, but that Johnson makes use of some of the same linguistic resources that Burke does. I am not trying to argue that Johnson or any of his readers went away from the *Rambler* essays believing that projecting or financial speculation were like Milton's Death or akin to the experience of beholding the Alps (even if financial speculation had conferred similar thrills to South Sea Company investors prior to its collapse), but that the very malleability and openness of the discourse of the sublime that prevented it from being named as such—a semantic diffusiveness that Peter De Bolla has discussed in much greater detail than I can here<sup>122</sup>—was what allowed writers like Johnson to incorporate its terms and dynamics into ostensibly non-aesthetic cultural commentary. In other words, owing to a high degree of conceptual ambiguity, the essential tropes within the discourse of the sublime are easily put into the service of a critique of futurity which we can then re-read (after the Romantic valorization of properly sublime experience) as containing within it the possibility for its own transvaluation. If the Romantics could locate transcendence in the experience of the sublime, then we may be able to account for the ideational triumph of the future over the past in the eighteenth century even in—or perhaps especially in—the work of writers such as Johnson where the future and the fantasies engendered by it are subjected to scrutiny and attack.

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<sup>122</sup> For more on the characteristics of the discourse of the sublime in the eighteenth-century see Peter De Bolla *The Discourse of the Sublime: Readings in History, Aesthetics and the Subject*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989. Although much older than De Bolla's intensely self-reflexive and theoretically sophisticated study, Samuel Monk's classic study of the sublime points towards the diffusiveness of this discourse (op. cit. 120). See especially Chapter IV "The Sublime in Transition" (63-83).

That this triumph occurred we might look to Hazlitt who saw this victory as so decisive that he could formulate a response to it in the second decade of the nineteenth century: “I cannot see, then, any rational or logical ground for that mighty difference in the value which mankind generally set upon the past and future.”<sup>123</sup> He notes that people tend to think of the future as “everything” and the past as “nothing,” but for him it is unclear why a temporal domain “more imaginary, a more fantastic creature of the brain than [the past]” should occupy the thoughts of so many people. He suggests that this preference is strongest for those who “have a fortune to make, or are in pursuit of rank and power,” while only in the “quiet innocence of shepherds, in the simplicity of pastoral ages” does memory and reflection play a significant role. To Hazlitt’s alignment of past and pastoral we could add the small, the contained, the beautiful, and the feminine, while his association of futurity and political/economic ambition opens up into the domains of the active, the powerful, the sublime, and the masculine. These added associations are not meant to be entirely rigid or final, but it is clear that by the end of the eighteenth century the speculative has been removed almost entirely from the domains of sordid lucre and fanciful indolence—even if a certain wistfulness concerning fortunes remains—that played such an important role in polemics directed toward stock-jobbers that characterized earlier literature. Johnson’s critique seems to draw on those earlier associations, but the virulence of his characterization is clearly laying the foundation for, at the very least, Hazlitt’s ability to associate temporal domains with aesthetic categories, and at the most, the ideological triumph of the speculation over reflection and the laudable presentism of grounded sobriety. It is neither here nor there whether Johnson was consciously drawing on the vocabulary of aesthetic theory for his psychology (he could not have

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<sup>123</sup> William Hazlitt “On the Past and Future” in *Table Talk* (originally published in 1821-22, essays written between 1813 and 1820), edited and introduced by Catherine Macdonald Maclean. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1959. P. 22.



been drawing on Burke's essay for it was published almost five years after the remark from *Rambler* 2), but the rhetorical similarities between these discourses encourage an analysis of structural resemblances and differences.

The second reason for selecting Burke is that in failing to be rigorously consistent in his definitions and arguments, his version of the sublime exemplifies the diffuse and multiform character of this aesthetic category in the eighteenth century. In contrast to Kant's, pseudo-Longinus', or Boileau's systematicity and coherence, Burke emphasizes those features of the sublime that were frequently discussed, widely known, and even if not universally agreed upon, largely admitted to be important to the debate. Indeed, Burke himself admits that he is not so much developing a philosophically indisputable case concerning the ontology of the sublime as he is trying to clarify and codify rules for the discussion of aesthetic phenomena. Again, I am not concerned with positively assimilating Johnson's critique to Burke's theory, but in showing the various ways Johnson makes use of language that plays a significant role in the literature of sublimity.

The fact that there has been so many different takes on the sublime shows just how difficult it is to summarize Burke's ranging treatise. However one wishes to interpret the essay, the following list of features are of central importance to the Burkean sublime:

- 1) Obscurity: in terms of light, but also in terms of representation.
- 2) Infinity: Something need not be infinite to be sublime, but must excite ideas of the infinite, which is no more than being unable to perceive the bounds of an object.
- 3) Power: both disciplinary and psychological power.
- 4) Privation: vacuity, darkness, solitude, silence.
- 5) Vastness: things great and small.

- 6) In the presence of the sublime, “the mind is hurried out of itself,” which is to say, it loses itself in the object and more importantly, in that which the object in the light of day, in its completeness and clarity, *might be*.

For Burke, the passion most relevant to the experience of the sublime is fear, because with fear comes the loss of all rational faculties. It is for this reason that Burke’s *Inquiries* focus so extensively on the problem of pain, and with pain, power, or that which has the ability to inflict pain. The ocean, for instance, produces a sense of the sublime in ways that a vast and expansive plain cannot because the former conjures a fear associated with loss of life. It is important to recall that Burke’s sublime is limited to situations in which the subject is not directly exposed to danger, for actual danger eliminates the possibility of the imaginative activity essential to the experience of the sublime. The sublime can only be felt when one is at a safe remove from such actual danger and can enter into an imaginative (and future-oriented) engagement with the source of potential danger. This is why Burke is so insistent upon qualities associated with the contours and limits of the object. Rigid demarcation of the object engendered by absolute clarity forestalls an imaginative engagement with the object that would seek to find boundaries that cannot be physically apprehended. Thus, incompleteness plays an important but unstated role in Burke’s sense of the sublime. Completeness—possible only in the light of day, where obscurity is minimized vis-à-vis the perceiver, where visible boundaries interrupt a psychical movement towards the infinite, where order is maintained by the subject’s ability to fully comprehend the object—is essentially *opposed* to the sublime.

The imaginative engagement with the sublime object “effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning.” In this respect, Burke’s *Enquiry* presents the reader with a positive transvaluation of the conflict of the faculties, a

conflict eighteenth-century thinkers primarily understood in terms of its negative consequences upon the subject. Burke was certainly not the first writer to champion the powers of the imagination, but he played a vital role in its legitimation as a faculty in a zero-sum relationship with reason. Others had placed those faculties associated with the imagination and the sublime in a positive light, but few had gone the next step in suggesting that the quintessentially Enlightenment power of Reason could unduly limit the potential of the human subject.<sup>124</sup> Burke, like many other expositors of the sublime, conceived of the mental engagement with the sublime object as an essential part of being human. It is not calculative rationality that distinguishes “men from brutes,” but those more refined faculties oriented towards the suprasensible, the infinite, the imaginary and the sublime. Brutes are further distinguished from humans by their focus upon the attainment of immediate needs and desires. Burke does not go so far as to suggest that it is solely the faculty of Reason that is responsible for this drive towards immediate gratification, but his silence on the subject raises just such a possibility. If it is some rational faculty that is behind the willing of action oriented towards an immediate end, then it follows that the imaginative faculties are associated with the deferral of pleasure and satisfaction. This is certainly implied throughout Burke’s treatise and warrants further consideration.

Much has been made of Burke’s attempt to situate aesthetic experience in the physiology of the human organism. But what is equally interesting about Burke’s *Enquiry* is its insistence upon an internal structure of psychological expectation that grounds the experience of the sublime. This is registered best in his discussion of “The artificial Infinite.” Burke writes that when “the ear receives any simple sound, it is struck by a single pulse of the air, which makes the ear-drum...vibrate according to the

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<sup>124</sup> I am obviously referring here to the writers of aesthetic treatises and opinions. Within the faith-oriented domain of theology there were of course many writers extending back into the seventeenth century that denigrated claims for the supremacy of Reason and rationality. Rousseau presents a similar objection in the French tradition.

nature and species of the stroke.” The effect of this “simple sound”—which Burke then describes as a “single” pulse—is to have an immediate and fully present physiological reaction. But when this sound is put into a series, when the simple sound is exceeded by its repetition, Burke articulates a change in the kind of experience. We no longer have immediate bodily effects, but a mental state of “expectation [that] itself causes a tension.” The tension is produced not simply by a sound external to the perceiver, but an internal psychological structure of expectation that when “worked up to such a pitch [is] capable of the sublime.” It is this faculty of expecting that is uniquely productive of sublime experience, and as such deserves delineation from those more recognizable faculties known as apprehension and imagination.

Nevertheless, it is possible to see a structural homology between the temporal movement described here and the psychological movement towards spatial infinity discussed above in the subject’s desire to see limits in obscurity and the boundaries of the infinite. Both of these things are impossible, and it is that tension that gives rise to sense of “delightful horror” as Burke calls it. In any event, we see him playing with the same psychic movements that Johnson used to critique both future-thinking and spatial wandering. For all of Johnson’s concern about psycho-temporal displacement, Burke shows that “Wand’ring in the Wilds of future Being” is both valuable and quintessentially human. Moreover, rationality itself is responsible for the cause-and-effect, immediate banality of the life of beasts, whereas the imagination’s speculative capacity is what makes human life both interesting and pleasurable. And in drawing on the same aesthetic traditions as Burke, Johnson’s rhetoric comes into ideological conflict with his explicit attack on speculation.

In describing the subjective experience of infinity, Burke remarks upon the inability for the mind’s eye to fix on any single unit without getting lost in the next, at which point it moves on to the next unit, and so on into infinity. The perception of a

limited object allows us to fix upon it while the perception of an infinite object is characterized precisely by the inability to do so. Johnson uses the same logic when describing the process of future-thinking in *Rambler* 5: “Every man is sufficiently discontented with some circumstances of his present state, to suffer his imagination to range more or less in quest of future happiness, and to fix upon some point of time, in which, by the removal of the inconvenience which now perplexes him, or acquisition of the advantage which he at present wants, he shall find the conditions of his life very much improved.” Of course, Johnson criticizes this proclivity by noting that when this moment of attainment or satisfaction occurs, there is no satisfaction, and that the mind continues to open up still further and further into the future: “it generally comes without the blessing for which it was desired; but we solace ourselves with some new prospect, and press forward again with equal eagerness.” The realization that the object of desire fails to satisfy a lack that is essential to the human condition induces an imaginative “ranging” that seeks still more remote objects for satisfaction. Because desire is predicated upon an essential and infinite lack, the future appears to be an infinite and always incomplete reserve of “prospects” that the mind pursues as far as Burke’s eye does the infinite topographical prospect. Johnson on the one hand calls attention to the futility of human pursuits, but he also suggests that speculation, which he would define in *The Dictionary* as a mental scheme not yet reduced to practice, is the animating and dynamic force of life itself.

This analogy extends still further. Johnson, in an only slightly tongue-in-cheek fashion, recommends a strategy for this infinite deferral of pleasure that a friend of his employs, namely, “by a constant practice of referring the removal of all his uneasiness to the coming Spring,” and by this means keep “his hopes...in full bloom three parts of the year, and in the other part never fully blasted.” This observation leads Johnson into an encomium celebrating the wonders of the spring. Invoking the familiar tropes

of rebirth and renewal, Johnson gradually moves towards a recognition of nature as “an inexhaustible stock of materials upon which [a man] can employ himself.” What began as a diachronic mental ranging, moving from the present to “the coming Spring,” now has become a synchronic ranging over the “inexhaustible stock of materials” offered by nature. This realization forces him, like Burke’s sublime might, towards an ultimate recognition of “the sovereign author of the universe” that is the glorious cause of this infinite variety. The logic of the Burkean sublime can be seen fully formed in Johnson’s essay. From an essential and infinite expectation arises an imaginative escape into the future that will be repeated over and over by the lack-driven subject. Johnson begins to effect a self-containing limitation on the speculative faculty by restricting the object of desire to the spring. But, the spring itself offers an inexhaustible reserve of objects, so psychic containment is deferred and displaced by a subsequent recognition of the divinity inherent in nature. The psychical motion of the desiring subject, characterized by infinite deferral, comes up finally against the “author of the universe,” effectively terminating that motion by naming its unnamable limit. Johnson thus comes to be the transcendental signifier of the text that is the world: as an “authored” being in an “authored” world capable of breaking out of his textualized existence to acknowledge that the writer himself is both in the text/world and out of it enough to witness himself being authored. Is this not perhaps what Burke has in mind when he describes the subject of sublime experience as being hurried out of the self and consequently capable of seeing his/her place in the infinite order of things? Language, if put into the service of atemporal meditation, glorification, axiomatic endorsement, or objective delimitation of desire thus offers only a single and necessarily unsatisfactory “point of time.” However, Johnson’s essay presents us with a narrative of desire itself, how it moves and is moved by a stubbornly temporal subject. It is possible in moments such as this to see how Johnson’s use of the Burkean

drama of sublime experience—its motions and its transcendental climax—might implicate the structure of narrative and the meaning that narrative teleology imparts to an otherwise insatiable desiring subject.

We also see Johnson's anticipation of Burke in *Rambler* 17, where Johnson describes the imaginary vision of attaining some future goal:

We represent to ourselves the pleasures of some future possession, and suffer our thoughts to dwell attentively upon it, till it has wholly ingrossed the imagination, and permits us not to conceive any happiness but its attainment, or any misery but its loss; every other satisfaction which the bounty of providence has scattered over life is neglected as inconsiderable, in comparison of the great object which we have placed before us, and is thrown from us as incumbering our activity, or trampled under foot as standing in our way.

Here we see the phenomenological bent of Johnson's theorizations of the imaginary future in the notion of representing the future to "ourselves," but what is of note is the way that the representation forces the subject to "suffer" his or her thoughts "to dwell attentively upon it," as though the individual's capacity to control the encounter with this "great object" is rendered null once apprehension occurs. Although "to suffer oneself" to do anything did not necessarily signify sacrifice or pain, the authority capable of granting the mind permission to dwell, or "allowance to suffer our thoughts to dwell," derives not from some rational faculty of the mind, but a mentally deviant faculty in conflict with Reason. The point of the essay is to show that something other than reason guides this process of fixation, and that something is closely related to those oppositional terms discussed at the beginning of this chapter: fancy, imagination, the "wand'ring" mind, "airy" notions. "Satisfactions" and "happiness" are put aside in favor of this anxious state of deprivation that implies the subservience of the individual to the object. Once this psychic battle is lost, the object "wholly ingrosse[s]" the mind, denying it any permission to shift focus and thus reorienting the actions of the body. Recalling Imlac's words, it is precisely this authority that undermines the state by directing action away from the present and the real towards

the futuristic and the possible. Again, one may object to the quasi-assimilation of this passage (or any other like it) to an aesthetic tradition on the grounds that the apprehension of the “great object” puts that object to what Kant would term “subjectively final use,” or that it renders what I am calling an encounter with an aesthetic object an “interested” encounter. But this passage suggests precisely the opposite: that we are drawn to the fictive future object *in spite of ourselves*, that we “suffer” our thoughts to be drawn to it, that this attention in fact forces a normative reversal of objects of true value (the “satisfactions...scattered over life”) and objects of absolutely no value, the imagined “future possession.” Reading this passage along with that concerning the dangerous prevalence of imagination allows us to see how this normative reversal constitutes something like a “madness” that spurs albeit futile action. Johnson’s criticism in this passage opens up the possibility that a future-induced reverie produces an energetic madness that may fail, but that at the very least stands in sharp contrast to “satisfaction.” The enervation produced by this satisfaction is precisely the point of departure (literally and figuratively) for *Rasselas* (and *Rasselas*).

#### *Futurity, Uncertainty and Narrative*

##### *The Lottery*

I have argued that radical changes in the British financial system opened up new methods of gaining control over temporal futurity and thus new ways of imagining the future. For this reason, I would like to more carefully examine a number of *The Rambler* that deals with one of the most important institutions of the eighteenth-century British financial world, namely, the lottery. Although first proposed as a method of debt financing in the same year as the establishment of the Bank of England (1694), Johnson’s essay attests to the ongoing psychic, moral, and economic challenges posed by the new financial order. *Rambler* 181, written in the form of a



letter from an anonymous linen-draper to the Rambler lamenting his transformation from industrious merchant to obsessive lottery gambler, opens with a motto from Horace, translated by Francis as “Nor let me float in fortune’s pow’r,/ Dependant on the future hour.” The structurally parallel phrases “fortune’s pow’r” and “future hour” inaugurates an essay that is about the subjugation of the self to a greater phantasmal power, the “future hour,” when one wins the lottery. In Horace’s original, these lines come at the end of an epistle proffering advice to a young man at court. In the final section, Horace chastises anyone who would presume to dictate their own future when it is clear that only “the bounteous gods [are able to] design” such things as longer life and greater wealth. Fortune is figured as an anti-god, distinct from “the bounteous gods” whose transcendence guarantees their supremacy; but, Fortune is also an anti-human in that it is also something higher, something upon which one can “depend.” Johnson’s use of this quotation, taken in its full context, thus underscores his ambivalence about the ontological status of futurity as it pertains to the individual: although one is totally incapable of knowing or managing it, it exerts a strange potency over the human. The epistle’s final lines, “But for a firm and tranquil mind/ That blessing in myself I find” would have served equally well as a counter-point to the merchant’s eventual behavior. That counter-point is instead offered in the merchant’s description of his earlier, pre-lottery life of firm and tranquil industriousness:

[At] the age of three and twenty I opened a shop for myself, with a large stock, and such credit among all the merchants who were acquainted with my master, that I could command whatever was imported curious or valuable. For five years I proceeded with success proportionate to close application and untainted integrity; was a daring bidder at every sale; always paid my notes before they were due; and advanced so fast in commercial reputation, that I was proverbially marked out as the model of young traders, and every one expected that a few years would make me an alderman.

What stand out in this passage are the merchant's virtues of being ahead of time and being stable. The writer is only "three and twenty" when he begins, a rather young age that makes him "the model of young traders." It is no surprise given what we have seen of Johnson's politicized rhetoric in his critiques of imagination that it is the linen-draper's application and timeliness that gives him the power to *command* whatever commodities come into the city. He pays his debts "before they were due," which leads into his observation that these virtues are what made him such a reputable tradesman. This quality of attentiveness is essential for a stability that might culminate in his becoming an alderman, a status only possible given prolonged attachment to place—there will be no "wand'ring" here. The language of the passage underscores this drama of settlement. The merchant's activities are bold in their finality: he opened, commanded, bid, paid, proceeded, advanced. Finally, he is "marked," which metaphorically guarantees his permanence and stasis. Even though he is moving up the ladder, he is characterized by a "close application"—his thoughts are "home," to return to Cali's address—that is possible only in virtue of his constant physical and psycho-temporal presence.

After a casual invitation to purchase a lottery ticket leads him into a spiral of obsessive gambling, he relates that he "wrote the numbers upon dice, and allotted five hours every day to the amusement of throwing them in a garrett," a foolish and wasteful practice that is no doubt why at this point his "shop was for the most part abandoned to my servants." There is an important blurring of this physical absence, "abandoned to my servants," and a psycho-temporal absence—as in "Get your head in the game!"—which we later learn stems from his dismay at learning that the number next to his (a ticket with only one number different from his own) was awarded the largest prize: "I could not forbear to revolve the consequences which such a bounteous allotment would have produced." His physical absence is the direct result of his

transformation from applied-and-timely-merchant to consequence-revolving dreamer. Again, the merchant has “suffered his thoughts” to fixate on the future rather than the present; he “could not forbear,” as though the future possibility was in control of him, rather than the reverse. This displacement of responsibility intimates that the object of the imagination gradually attains a psychological force that negates its very status as phantom, fiction, or fantasy. It becomes an aesthetic object whose origin is neither in the world nor the mind, but one established on the boundaries of human perception and the real. As the mental state of the merchant suffers under the burden of the future, so do his actions contribute to the decomposition of the microcosmic state that is his linen shop.

The entire letter is structured as a series of “and thens” which represent the almost frantic frame of mind that characterizes someone who is “dependant on the future hour”: “At length another lottery was opened...” but the ticket he wants is sold while his “heated...imagination” contemplates possible numbers; “I returned to my conjectures, and after many arts of prognostication...” he buys a ticket that wins him “a despicable prize of fifty pounds;” then, “With the news of a [new] lottery I was soon gratified” but his experiment with the dice proves faulty and he “lost thirty pounds by this adventure”; and then, “I began now to seek assistance against ill luck, by an alliance with those that had been more successful” but this time his share of the winning ticket is so small that he ends up detesting himself even more. This frenzied movement rhetorically energizes the concise and pointed admonition of the merchant’s friend Eumathes by acting as a stylistic foil for the polished and pithy wisdom of this well-taught sage (Eu-mathes):

There are, said he, few minds sufficiently firm to be trusted in the hands of chance. Whoever finds himself inclined to anticipate futurity, and exalt possibility to certainty, should avoid every kind of casual adventure, since his grief must be always proportionate to his hope. You have long wasted that time which, by a proper application, would have certainly, though moderately,

encreased your fortune, in a laborious and anxious persuit [sic] of a species of gain, which no labour or anxiety, no art or expedient can secure or promote.

The motion of the essay which mimics the psychic motion of the merchant who “finds himself inclined to anticipate futurity” is headed off by Eumathes’ decidedly more meditative and methodical discourse on that very “laborious and anxious persuit” of future gain. The confidence implicit in Eumathes’ grand and categorical proclamations is visibly distinct from the merchant’s frightened and frustrating attempts to discover a logic in randomness. In keeping with the earlier tropes of wandering and settlement, it is possible to see in this distinction how narrative itself becomes the literary mode proper to expectation and disappointment while polemical oratory (and the philosophical meditation that it requires) finds itself allied with Eumathes’ advice to get back to work. Of course, what is interesting is that work and application are, within the Johnsonian framework, unworthy of narrativization. One thinks of Johnson’s narrative compression in the scene from *Rasselas* in which an inventor attempts to design an airplane: “In a year the wings were finished...” Aside from noting that Rasselas “visited the work from time to time,” we know nothing about the events of this year. Indeed, in this uneventful year, it is “time” becoming interchangeable with all other “times” that makes “time to time” visiting possible; that is, the first and the second “times” of “time to time” are so indistinct and unworthy of memorialization as to warrant identical names. In the *Rambler* essay, the tiniest eventuality, a casual invitation to purchase a lottery ticket, creates a dramatic tension that allows the otherwise “satisfied” and “happy” merchant to spiral towards his doom. In an instant the reader moves from the self-satisfied linen-draper capable of summing up years of work and “close application” in two sentences to a moral and economic debauchee whose every experience is recorded with as much detail (and ink) as the essay form will allow. The conditions of possibility for narrative thus become

inextricably bound to the tyranny of the future over the present, and more importantly, over the subject. The anonymous merchant announces his heightened awareness of the future by comparing himself to some of the stock characters of eighteenth-century fiction: “Neither did captive, heir, or lover feel so much vexation from the slow pace of time, as I suffered between the purchase of my ticket and the distribution of the prizes.” These figures are all linked not simply by wanting something, but by placing their hopes in an indeterminate future state that is riven with obstacles, obstacles that Johnson’s prose had tried to formally mimic in the passage quoted from *Adventurer* 45. And for Johnson as well as many other eighteenth-century writers of prose fiction, most notably Henry Fielding, those obstacles lying in the road (which is no different from the course of time in *picaresque*) constitute the stuff of novels and that thus give the eighteenth-century novel such an overwhelmingly episodic structure. If only one word can be applied to *Rasselas*, a text to which I will shortly turn, it is *episodic*.

We learn in *Rambler* 182 (the one following that concerning the lottery) that the type of person emblemized by the lottery-obsessed merchant is in fact only one of countless individuals who “snatch all opportunities of growing rich by chance.” These individuals, like the merchant, disdain industry and labor, and from this hostile disposition “proceeds the common inclination to experiment and hazard.” *Rambler* 182 is specifically directed towards those who desire to grow rich by marrying wealthily and—like its complement, *Rambler* 181—invokes a final crucial aspect of future thinking in Johnson’s writings that reaches into the domain of the aesthetic and of the sublime in particular. Johnson writes in this second essay, on the subject of opportunistic marriage, that the desire to place oneself into the hands of chance and thus the future is to allow the fascination with the future to “[take] possession of the mind.” This is a property of futurity that had been elaborated in 181 by the lottery-playing merchant:

My heart leaped at the thought of such an approach to sudden riches [he has discovered that the ticket next to his has won], which I considered myself, however contrarily to the laws of computation, as having missed by a single chance; and I could not forbear to revolve the consequences which such a bounteous allotment would have produced, if it had happened to me. This dream of felicity, by degrees took possession of my imagination. The great delight of my solitary hours was to purchase an estate, and form plantations with money which once might have been mine, and I never met my friends but I spoiled all their merriment by perpetual complaints of my ill luck.

I have touched on the aspect of this passage which deals with the fact that the thought of the future is something which cannot be resisted because of its irresistible force, but the various comments regarding the way in which the future begins to take possession of the imagination is another important parallel to subsequent discourses of the sublime (this is present in *Rambler* 17 as well). One of the most important figures of the sublime object, from Burke through Kant and on into the later work of Archibald Alison is its ability to take up all of the mind and leave no room for any other considerations. Here, as in 182, the subject is left with nothing to do but to ruminate, to ponder, to dream of a set of “consequences.” His mind is not simply interested in procuring future gains, but with purchasing estates and forming plantations. In retrospect he is able to recognize that these reveries were taking the place of rational computation, of Reason, and that leads to a neglect of social imperatives and manners. His imaginative isolation revolves around an aesthetically-induced collapse of those faculties that put him into contact with others. This gets almost to the heart of the sublime experience as the Romantics understood it, but it also picks up on that aspect of the sublime that Burke described as deriving from the instinct for self-preservation (rather than socialization, which he associated with the beautiful). What is consequently of great interest in the linen-draper’s reverie is that he purchases an estate and forms plantations, actions that would irreparably sever him from the world of commerce, establish him as “landed” and “settled,” and deliver him from the vicissitudes of the marketplace and modernity. In this respect, the subject becomes lost

in the future (the mazy “Wilds of future Being”) and also *to* the future. Ironically, the speculative ideology thus contains within it an atavistic and anti-modern legitimating mechanism. We see Johnson’s linen-draper embrace the speculative in the name of stasis. This is, of course, also the dynamic of *Rasselas* where the eponymous hero sets out in a quest for a condition in which questing is no longer necessary.

Eumathes’ remark at the end of 181 that there are few minds “sufficiently firm to be trusted in the hands of chance” is a reaction to the pliability and ductility of mind that characterizes the individual who is in “Fortune’s power,/ Dependant on the future hour.” Although Burke relies upon the concept of horror to inflect his understanding of the subject’s encounter with the sublime object, he shares with Johnson’s sense of futurity the idea that “the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it.” Further, the sublime, like Johnson’s future fantasy, “hurries us on by an irresistible force.” For all of these similarities, however, there is no explicit connection of future-oriented adventure (risk-taking, venture capitalism, speculation, projection) and the positive kind of aesthetic invigoration that Burke tells us results from feelings of the sublime. On the contrary, Johnson has Eumathes position speculation in opposition to “rational and manly industry” in the final sentence of the letter. This coincides with an historical tendency to associate fancy with femininity, but as Catherine Ingrassia shows in her study of early-eighteenth-century financial culture, speculative investment was also specifically associated with femininity.<sup>125</sup> Johnson clearly draws on those associations for his essay’s moral in having Eumathes’ concluding remark hinge upon the opposition between fanciful reveries concerning futurity and the more “manly” realities of labor. But Johnson’s insistence upon the palpability of the future

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<sup>125</sup> Catherine Ingrassia *Authorship, Commerce, and Gender in Early Eighteenth-Century England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. See especially Chapter 1 “Women, credit and the South Sea Bubble.”

leads to other conclusions that partially undermine Eumathes' axiomatic finale. To the extent that the future is vividly described as having the characteristics of sublimity (a rather far extent, I am suggesting) it also serves as an opportunity for the speculative subject to assert his or her mastery over its allures and powers. Johnson's anonymous "contributor"<sup>126</sup> remarks in 181 that the species of affliction that beset him in form of lottery gambling is one that afflicts many people, and the author of *Rambler* 182 points to the universality of the desire to engage in projects that have no certain chances for success. Perhaps Johnson's critique of the lottery did discourage people from investing in it specifically, but if we read the rhetorical embodiment of the merchant's adventures (he styles it an adventure himself in the letter) against the grain, we see that risky undertakings are the only kinds of experiences worth having. After all, it isn't the stories of the diligent or sagacious citizen that Johnson provides. So while from an elevated and meditative prospect Eumathes has the ability to excoriate the merchant for his lapse, the reader is nevertheless aware that the story—and an interesting one at that—has come to an end. Our newly "enlightened" merchant may return to his receipts, his prices, his linens, and his accounts to inhabit a persona with all the flair and energy of, well, an accountant. When he was wasting his life tumbling dice and forming imaginary plantations he was at least living a life. His experiences and experiments with futurity may have deprived him of a modest sum, but they also furnished him with the qualifications to "warn those who are yet uncaptivated" in the form of a life story. If we take it in its strictest etymological sense, Eumathes' name thus plays a very important role: he is someone who is taught not by life but by lessons (taking *mathematic* in its strict sense of being learned in a theoretical or scientific sense). Within the terms of the story, Eumathes has no life: he exists purely as the spokesperson for a morality and practicality that exists outside of the chance-

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<sup>126</sup> It was Johnson himself who wrote the letter.



determined world which can only be represented in the form of narrative. Johnson's brief tale shows that it is not life (narratable experience) that offers "lessons,"—which is how we often conceive of the *Rambler* series—but that life is representationally incompatible with lessons understood as doctrine, maxims, or codes. This is why the linen-draper cannot offer his own moral (it must come from a cloistered subjectivity, such as that of Eumathes), even though this is what he more or less promises us in the letter's opening paragraph. What this particular essay further suggests is that life, however frustrating and miserable it may be, is experienced only insofar as it is temporally deferred and displaced by "the future hour."

The claim that a narrative-worthy life experience is possible only given a future-oriented subjective disposition has important consequences for the individual reader insofar as adventure increasingly becomes dissociated from the realm of physical travel and begins to define itself as the everyday speculative activity of the middle class. That shift has been articulated and evidenced by Michael Nerlich in his compendious two-volume work *The Ideology of Adventure*.<sup>127</sup> Nerlich shows that over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the role of the adventurer changes significantly. Although his dialectical method reveals contradictions and historical overlaps that defy any overly pithy summary, he argues that gradually the merchant adventurer became less and less physically adventurous and more inclined to remain at home while his siblings, friends, or employees conducted the actual maritime projects that yielded him his profits. The textbook literary example of this figure is *The Merchant of Venice*'s Antonio who has sent his ships out to sea and who stands as a kind of foil for the more intrepid if penurious Bassanio whom Portia likens at one point to that greatest adventurer, Hercules. In the writings of Bacon in particular, this historical trend also involves the legitimization of a mythos surrounding

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<sup>127</sup> Michael Nerlich *The Ideology of Adventure* (orig. 1977), trans. Ruth Cowley. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

adventure that allows the capitalist to remain safe and secure while the agents of capital courageously and obliviously carry out the dictates of an “uncourageous” director. This legitimization “decays into a suggestive adventure myth for employees, which has the function of distracting and appeasing them” (209). It is on these grounds that Nerlich asserts that the ideology of adventure “invents ever more subtle forms that are based primarily on the...propagation of the idea of the disinterested adventure for the sake of adventure.”

Nerlich’s argument is highly interesting and persuasive, but in his specification of adventure as the physical process of moving out into the world, he argues as though the only way one can understand adventure in the eighteenth century is as a mystification of some more fundamental operation of capital. The claim that capitalism gains ground as the capitalist is removed farther and farther from the source of actual danger, actual work, rings true, but what the writers of the eighteenth century show time and again, to complicate Nerlich’s critique, is that adventure, particularly when understood as engagements with a hostile and aleatory futurity, attains to a material reality that cannot be solely boiled down to a dominating and determining economic base. His unwillingness to consider the possibility that the experience of adventure is and always was crucially tied to this type of engagement is made apparent in his dismissal of the primary objection to usurious lending in the Lutheran tradition, namely, that it involved a sacrilegious usurpation of divine determining authority over future events in the temporal (earthly) world. He suggests that Luther, as a “theologian with theological arguments” was merely a spokesperson for risk-filled trade in commercial capitalism, but he provides no reason for this claim. In fact, the usurpation of divine authority, whatever its economic consequences, was a very serious matter in its own right, one that generated the majority of the debate concerning usury, profiteering, adventuring, speculating, and insuring from the fifteenth through the

nineteenth centuries. In Nerlich's struggle to posit the economic realities behind the ideology of adventure, he fails to consider the simple fact that the story of adventure has a great deal to do with the story of the individual's willingness to submit to temporal uncertainty (which for Luther and Calvin meant God or Providence, but which for later writers such as Johnson meant the world itself). This objection matters for the story I wish to tell about the speculative ideology because once the financial revolution began, adventure is not so much transformed into a hollow myth of courageous individualism sustaining the embedded forces of bourgeois capital as it is translated into more quotidian practices like lottery playing or stock investment. Nor does adventure as such simply linger as the quasi-experience of a confused lumpenproletariat. On the contrary, it persists in the form of speculation that realizes the same aesthetic, phenomenological, and economic goals that the traditional adventurer had sought to achieve. In other words, the adventure of the Robinsonade is the speculative action of everyman once we realize that adventure is about uncertainty and that speculation is nothing other than the desire to engage that uncertainty.

Nerlich's story accounts for the economic behaviors of England's Bassanios, or those men who went to sea in the service of some more powerful and wealthy financier, but he refuses to consider the possibility that the legacy of adventure lies not in actually going to sea, but in the more universal practice of "Wand'ring in the Wilds of future Being." In its ambivalent position towards temporal uncertainties and in its allegorical form, *Rasselas* attests to the blurring of the traditional adventurer on the one hand—the traveling, courageous, exploratory, and heroic subject—and the average eighteenth-century British subject who gets caught up in a newly created world of financial and social mobility and who thereby perpetually confronts the vastness of an infinite, obscure, jagged and aleatory future.

*Speculation, Specters and Rasselas*

As a highly removed and fantastic Oriental tale, *Rasselas* appears to confirm the view that adventure understood as traveling into the unknown has no place in the modern (Western) world; but, as an allegory of English speculative subjectivity, it shows precisely how the desire to escape everyday contentments (the “happiness” and “satisfactions” of “bounteous Providence”) through recourse to a wild and perplexing elsewhere, be it “the various conditions of men” (Rasselas addressing Imlac), the world, chance, or “the future hour,” is an almost universal condition. The vocative opening lines asking the reader to “attend” allows the short novel to be both a literary experience concerning actual worldly adventure (a history) and a didactic model for the less dramatically energized instances of speculative adventure characteristic of everyday life (an example). The “choice of life” is essentially a “choice *to* adventure,” a choice that serves as the narrative’s motor and as the narrator’s moral dilemma. Readings of the novel’s notoriously ambiguous ending have argued so much before, pointing out that the final chapter somehow erases the value of the rest of the novel insofar as the “choice of life” motif that gets and keeps the story going is ultimately rejected as a viable human disposition or endeavor.<sup>128</sup> Prior to assessing that ending, however, it is important to note that the moral framework characteristic of Johnson’s tale privileges those characters interested in and willing to pursue life, those characters who *choose life*, regardless of the challenge to organic wholeness that the ending poses. This is not to say that attempts to account for the ending in terms of the novel as a whole are unimportant, but simply that the reader’s experience of the story consists primarily in recognizing the merits of adventure and risk-taking over isolation and security. That process of valorization is effected through characterizations that

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<sup>128</sup> For a thorough history of *Rasselas* criticism, see Edward Tomarken “A History of *Rasselas* Criticism, 1759-1986” in *Johnson, Rasselas, and the Choice of Criticism*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1989. PP. 5-37. On this particular argument, see esp. page 19.

variously draw upon the discourse of the sublime and that present those characters as possessed of heroic and adventurous attitudes towards the sublime openness of the uncertain future. Imlac, for all of his foibles and rhetorical extravagancies, receives the narrator and reader's approbation largely because his set of experiences suggests an independent and invigorated disposition towards his worldly destiny, a wandering Bohemian intellectual who has divided his time between hard labor and hard thinking. On the one hand, his historical experiences of setting out into the world as a merchant place him firmly in the camp of Nerlich's pre-modern adventurer, allowing him to tell inspiring and entertaining tales of his travels; on the other, he functions as the source of reason, wisdom and encouragement for a group of young travelers who allegorically represent the average ambitious young reader entering into the uncertain world of eighteenth-century English commerce and culture.<sup>129</sup> By playing the dual roles of literary-historical curiosity and polemical sage—a dualism made possible by the fact that Johnson was appropriating various generic forms for his hybrid text—he figurally dramatizes the place of that courageous individualism, which Nerlich would associate with a pre-modern world of actual adventure, in *modern* English society. That these worlds are different, that the world of risk-laden mercantile adventure differs from the more overtly allegorical milieu out of which Rasselas, Nekayah and Pekuah emerge, we need only consider the fact that unlike Imlac's highly contingent and therefore more dangerous entry into the world at the beginning of his first travels, Rasselas and the others leave the Happy Valley with jewels and money enough to guarantee them a provisional degree of safety and the means to travel and explore without serious risk. Even so, Imlac's claim that he placed little value in monetary

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<sup>129</sup> Srinivas Aravamudan addresses the related problem of the Oriental "garb" of Johnson's allegorical tale. Where he draws attention to the essential and substantial functions of this Oriental dress, I wish to focus upon the substantial role played by commercial and adventurous speculation in Johnson's universal humanist tale. See *Tropicopolitans*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999. P. 204.

gain provides the story's chronologically primary piece of evidence that adventure may be a way of life independent of its economic roots.<sup>130</sup>

Imlac does indeed straddle the two worlds I have been discussing, but there is already evidence in his renunciation of profiteering that adventure can be sublimated into a more general desire to engage the uncertain world and to contemplate the infinite and opaque array of realities secreted in futurity. When Imlac sets sail on "the world of waters," a familiar Romance adventure topos, he states the following: "I looked round about me with pleasing terror, and thinking my soul enlarged by the boundless prospect, imagined that I could gaze for ever without satiety."<sup>131</sup> Imlac, in accordance with Johnson's own skepticism and silence about sublime experience, grows tired of this *physical* instance of the sublime, "I grew weary of looking on barren uniformity, where I could only see again what I had already seen." Concerning this reaction, the critic Robert Mayhew has suggested that "the sublime can hold the attention no more than the beautiful, even if its initial impact is greater...A literary or aesthetic approach to scenery and nature, then, is unable to provide lasting happiness as a choice of life. Indeed, because no one can sustain an aesthetic response, it is not even a viable choice of life."<sup>132</sup> The inability for nature to spur feelings of sublimity is correct, but in his failure to consider the interplay of the physical and the temporal sublime in Johnson, Mayhew misses what is most revealing about this scene

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<sup>130</sup> I am using "story" in contradistinction to "narrative" or "plot": the sequence of events abstracted from the plot as well as all analeptic and proleptic references to events that do not play a role in the temporal period marked out by the narrative's plot. For more on this narratological distinction, see Gerard Genette *Narrative Discourse*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972.

<sup>131</sup> This is probably the clearest depiction of an experience of the Burkean sublime in Johnson's writing. There is one possible exception to this, namely, Johnson's description of beholding the Buller of Buchan in *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*. Interestingly, the language of the two passages is almost identical, and Johnson, like Imlac, registers his ultimate boredom. This gives way to his desire to explore the minutiae of the caverns. What is subsequently interesting is that instead of recording any of these observations, Johnson conjures a bizarre and hypothetical tale of pirate-hideaways and naval warfare in which the Buller might have played a role. *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, ed. Mary Lascelles. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971. PP. 19-21.

<sup>132</sup> Robert Mayhew "Nature and the Choice of Life in *Rasselas*" *SEL: Studies in English Literature*, vol. 39, no. 3, 1999. PP. 539-556.

concerning the structure and themes of *Rasselas*, namely, the novel's immediately subsequent transposition of sublime aesthesis onto the plane of temporality. Unlike Burke who recognized the infinite terrors of the ocean as productive of sublime experience, Johnson's Imlac is able to contain the vision of the ocean by seeing in it only physical uniformity. That process of containment does not, however, allow us to say that there is no sublime moment in Imlac's voyage, only that it is not generated by physical expansiveness. Burke himself argued that variety, jaggedness, irregularity, and unpredictability were essential components of the sublime, but while he could locate such attributes in the vast expanse of the sea or in a mountainous terrain, Imlac finds them instead in the variety of manners, customs, men, nations, and opinions, all of which are discussed as lying in his future:

I then descended into the ship, and doubted for a while whether all my future pleasures would not end like this [his short-lived "pleasing terror"] in disgust and disappointment. 'Yet, surely,' said I, 'the ocean and the land are very different; the only variety of water is rest and motion, but the earth has mountains and vallies, desarts and cities: it is inhabited by men of different customs and contrary opinions; and I may hope to find variety in life, though I should miss it in nature.'

Temporal unpredictability, which Imlac associates with the "future pleasures" of "life," displaces aesthetic preoccupation with a physical world that is subject to simple acts of cognitive containment: he is able to see the ocean as nothing but "rest and motion." While "nature" remains static and contained to delimited prospects, a fact which Imlac ironically communicates with a wryly self-effacing comment on his own perceptual inadequacy ("though I should miss it in nature"), by being an essentially temporal event, "life" contains within it countless phenomena each valuable because of their difference from other elements within that system. A "desart" has psychic and semic value as an element of a system that contains what it is not—"vallies," "cities," and terms of other orders such as "manners" and "contrary opinions"—and that only allows significance to be imparted to each of these elements over time. In *Rasselas*,

Johnson rejects the typical associations of natural wonders and sublimity—perhaps to attack the notion of the sublime itself—only to recuperate its presence within the domain of temporal diversity and speculative uncertainty. The Johnsonian sublime is only temporal, because only the future offered the kind of infinite irregularity and ominousness that were generative of sublime feeling.<sup>133</sup>

In addition to the desire for adventure that sets the story in motion and the mythos of adventure that keeps it going there is a harsh appraisal of social stability and static contentment that occurs in Pekuah's account of the seraglio in which she is held captive. The women, busy with their needles, represent both literal and symbolic isolation from the world, being kept in a "house built with stone" on "an island of the Nile" where all "repose in security." Not only is the shelter itself sheltered by being on an island, but the women apparently reside in "the inner apartments" of a house that is actually more of a fortress, given that it has "turrets overlook[ing] the country." All are at a quadruple remove from the world, being in the inner chambers of a stone fortress situated in a remote area of a distant land. That literal isolation produces a group of women that seem to possess the same marks as Burke's beasts and brutes: "[the women of the seraglio] ran from room to room as a bird hops from wire to wire in his cage. They danced for the sake of motion, as lambs frisk in a meadow." The gratification of desire is immediate, and when they are self-assured enough to quarrel over something, Pekuah tells us that "the motives of their animosity were so small that [she] could not listen without intercepting the tale." Pekuah exists as a human foil to

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<sup>133</sup> A recent essay delivered by Ann Marie Ross at the Western Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies' annual conference argues that there is a kind of temporal sublime at work in Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution*, drawing on the fact of the French Revolution's historico-temporal disruptiveness, but this view has many problems. Primarily, Burke would have conceived of such a disruptive movement as sublime only if it were impending, not as something that could retroactively be "reflected" upon. Secondly, Burke recognized the imminent threat of the revolution to English values, and as something that posed a palpable danger, it would not satisfy Burke's criterion for distance from danger that is generative of the sublime (as opposed to fear). "History as Tragedy: The Historical Sublime in 'Reflections on the Revolution in France'". WSECS conference hosted by the University of San Francisco, 2004.



these instinctual beasts, having active mental faculties that are characterized by the deferral of pleasure, whereas “[the] diversions of the women...were only childish play, by which the mind accustomed to stronger operations could not be kept busy...my intellectual faculties were flown to Cairo.” While the women “play,” Pekuah seeks mental business; where the women flit like birds and beasts according to fleeting momentary desires, Pekuah finds a boredom that can only be alleviated by a physical journey to a faraway land. Pekuah completes the picture of her incompatibility with this environment by contrasting the company of Nekayah with the “needling” labor of the isolated women: “nor will you suspect that captivity and absence from Nekayah could receive solace from silken flowers [that they are expected to craft].” Thus presence, immediacy, instinctual animality, historical and geographical isolation become aligned once again with a familiar instantiation of the Beautiful (flowers) while futurism, deferral, dissatisfaction and historical and geographical involvement are aligned with Pekuah, who unsurprisingly defines herself in opposition to the women. According to her, these women “do not...want that unaffected and ignoble beauty which may subsist without spriteliness or *sublimity*, without energy of thought or dignity of virtue. But to a man like the Arab such beauty was only a flower casually plucked and carelessly thrown away” (emphasis mine). The women are flowers making flowers, the Burkean Beautiful in a cycle of autoproduction underscored by the fact that the Subject of universal aesthetic judgment who imparts a modicum of meaning to their meaningless lives (the man, the ruler, the Arab) finds them at most agreeable and irrelevant. It is presumably Pekuah’s “sublimity,” the fact that she neither is nor enjoys making flowers, that wins her the affections that the Arab systematically denies the other women.

Unlike the rural peasants whom the party had earlier encountered in Chapter XIX “A glimpse of pastoral life,” the women are unable to consolidate their distaste

for their condition and mount a critique. In fact, it is difficult to find any justification in the text for the existence of these thoughtless human ciphers. Being deprived of “legitimate” discontent, they have no internal structures of expectation or speculation to alter the condition of things. If they do have problems, they are so trifling as to be ignored or summarily adjudicated by Pekuah. Their problems are limited, finite, even tiny, but the peasants have hordes of complaints, indistinct narratives, malevolent rage that is borne of their awareness of the historical contingency of the world. The peasants seem to know, for one reason or another, that things might have been different, which compels them to imagine that things can be different in the time to come. This distresses the Johnson of stability, but also serves as the grounds of his condemnation of the women of the seraglio. Pekuah comments on the women’s inability to speak:

Nor was much satisfaction to be hoped from their conversation: for of what could they be expected to talk? They had seen nothing; for they had lived from early youth in that narrow spot: of what they had not seen they could have no knowledge, for they could not read. They had no ideas but of the few things that were within their view, and had hardly names for any thing but their clothes and their food.

On this view, the ability to converse is indissociable from the awareness of differences between objects that are inscribed in the process of naming. The few objects that do circle within this body of individuals have names, but an ontological banality that characterizes those very objects renders the act of differentiation superficial at best. Unlike Pope’s Belinda, whose toilet objects prepare her all too well for sociality, these women must content themselves with decorating themselves for themselves. In having seen nothing, having lived only “in that narrow spot,” desire and discontent can manifest itself only in reference to what is petty and trifling. Elsewhere, Johnson writes that “vice is the natural consequence of narrow thoughts,” and it is apparent in *Rasselas* that the women of the seraglio, in being confined to this “narrow spot” are if

not entirely vicious, completely lacking in virtue.<sup>134</sup> More significantly, however, the discontent of these “narrow” women functions only to fracture their solidarity with one another by clearing space for a possessive individualist ideology that aims towards social atomization. It is possible in Johnson’s logic here to see how the speculative ideology, or an ideology of adventure, can serve as the grounds of a critique of possessive individualism. Petty possessive individualism results from social and historical isolation that stands in sharp contrast to the “spriteliness and sublimity” of character that can be gained only through adventures. It is important to add, however, that Johnson’s criticism of a fetishistic attachment to trifles depends upon a simultaneous acceptance of the adventurous (speculative) individual, in this case, Pekuah.

I have focused on Imlac’s early adventures and Pekuah’s time in the Arab’s seraglio not because they are the only instances of Johnson’s valorization of the heroic individualism that distinguishes the good from the bad, for there are numerous examples of this in his text ranging from Rasselas’ own desire to escape the obliviously secure inhabitants of the Happy Valley to the diseased psyche of the solitary astronomer. Imlac’s account of his past shows how the adventurous disposition gives rise to narrative in much the same way that the equally speculative if more morally suspect linen-draper was able to transcend his just but banal milieu through the mechanism of the lottery. The figure of Pekuah further shows how deeply entwined Johnson’s conception of value stems from the opposition between the sublime and the beautiful, although he refrains from acknowledging that source. In both cases, Johnson clears room for a kind of speculation that acknowledges the legitimacy of a subject who finds sublimity in the openness and uncertainty of the future. Johnson’s novel seems to support this view, and yet as many readers have

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<sup>134</sup> *Rambler* 4 (p. 25).

noted, the ending does seem to challenge it by shifting emphasis away from the choice of life to, in Nekayah's words, "the choice of eternity." Rather than try to organically fuse these two parts of the story, I think it is worth recognizing this radical departure—by which I mean the rejection of the speculative ideology in the final pages of the book—as a symptom of a more fundamental anxiety about the place of speculation in the modern economic and social order. One sign of this anxiety (and note that I do not insist that this anxiety is unique to Johnson's psyche or that his ending is crafted to respond to it) is to be found in the encounter between the group of travelers and the rural shepherds/peasants alluded to in the preceding pages. In it, Johnson assents to Crabbe's opinion of pastoral beauty and innocence, that "Fled are the times if ever such were seen/ When rustic poets praised their native green" ("The Village", 8-9). After they converse with the rural "innocents" for a brief time, we are presented with one of the very few noticeable normative intrusions by the narrator in the entire book:

...they were so rude and ignorant, so little able to compare the good with the evil of the occupation, and so indistinct in their narratives and descriptions, that very little could be learned from them. But it was evident that their hearts were cankered with discontent; that they considered themselves as condemned to labour for the luxury of the rich, and looked up with stupid malevolence toward those that were placed above them.

It is tempting to read this as an instance of free-indirect discourse, where the clearly malicious attack in the first of these two sentences is the sentiment of Rasselas, Nekayah, or even Imlac or Pekuah, but Johnson begins the next paragraph with an account of the princess's reaction. If free-indirect discourse was all that was needed to communicate the party's views of the shepherds, then the further articulation of Nekayah's thoughts would have been unnecessary. It is particularly interesting that the oft-equitable and always-charitable Johnson, precisely when he seems primed to relate the rational reasons for their discontent, charges them with "stupid malevolence."

While there is no doubt a hint of sympathy in his overall representation, it is a sympathy besmirched with condescension and loathing. That condescension I would argue stems from Johnson's uneasiness towards the kind of projecting desires possessed by an increasingly class conscious body of individuals who are shamefully confounding their designated aesthetic and temporal categories. Where we should have unselfconscious pastoral ideality (in the tradition of Goldsmith, or, later, Wordsworth), we get intensely class conscious historical agitation; where we should encounter contented rural innocence, we are given ambitious contenders for the prize. The cacophonous lamentations of the discontented masses also pose a palpable formal challenge to the idea that the speculative is generative of narrative. Whereas many critics in the tradition of Lukács have argued that the novel serves important historical functions for the materialist dialectic, I would submit that Johnson's tale quite adequately demonstrates the way that the novel speaks for the speculative individual and legitimizes his or her experience as a future-thinking subject only through the silencing of *classes* of individuals. For it is not the *lack* of a compelling narrative that produces this ire, which could be simply redressed by inserting one, but the inability for the peasantry to produce a "distinct" narrative or a "distinct" description. And it is here that we see how the same Johnson who could routinely and vigorously attack projection in his essays and poetry could also entertain the sublime character of speculative individualism in his novel: by using narrative and description to contain its excesses. The princess's subsequent reverie underscores precisely the problem with this distasteful blending:

She hoped that the time would come, when, with a few virtuous and elegant companions, she should gather flowers planted by her own hand, fondle the lambs of her own ewe, and listen, without care, among brooks and breezes, to one of her maidens reading in the shade.

This is not just a dream of pastoral innocence; it is one of total self-absorption, stasis, and uniformity. The flowers, lambs, and maidens that are all “her own,” her total lack of care, and the sense that nature is there for her pleasure all combine to produce a vision of a simple moment (a “time” that comes and never goes; Burke’s “simple sound”) that negates the shepherds’ world of history, change, disappointments, and futurity. Nekayah imagines herself at the center of scene (not an experience or a world) where everything circles around her; flora, fauna, friends, streams, and winds producing an egotistical synaesthesia through a process of doubling back to confirm her oneness with a world that she herself has created.

The overly wrought one-sidedness of Nekayah’s vision demands a heavy dose of readerly skepticism about this kind of speculative escapism, but the narrator’s rejection of the shepherds’ “stupid malevolence” and “indistinct narratives and descriptions” also denies approval of those attitudes that generate adventurous and speculative attitudes towards life. Nekayah’s highly limited hope thematizes precisely what is lacking in the indistinct narratives of rural life: if her dream is absurd, it is at least “distinct.” Even though her dream is ridiculously unattainable, its formal and figural containment provides Johnson with all the normative legitimacy he needs to take her into the next chapter, to give her more chances for adventure. In the meantime, the confused, struggling, indistinct, discontented, and future-oriented shepherds, left to their “rude and ignorant” lives in the fields, maintain a haunting presence in the very absence of their narrative.

That threatening primacy of a class possessed with collective agency receives its due in the final chapter, when each of the three aspirants acknowledge the futility of dreams that not coincidentally envision an individual will directing the actions of a group. This is the kind of ambivalence toward modernity that I have already pointed out, but here we see that ambivalence for what it is: an anxiety about the role of the

solitary adventurer in the economic and social orders of the future. Nekayah is free to hope of rural ideality because it is conformable to her rank, while the peasants' hopes for a better life call the notion of rank itself into question by introducing the question of class.<sup>135</sup> The burden of the future manifests itself in the scene involving the peasantry as either the desires of the speculative individual potentially delimited and restrained by narrative or as the tumultuous dissatisfactions of the masses opening up onto the truly ominous wilds of capital. In the characters' awareness of the impossibility of their final dreams, where what is acknowledged is some fundamental difficulty with placing a single individual at the helm of a collective (a Captain of Industry?), the peasantry returns as an explanation for the narrative's ultimate rejection of adventurous speculation. The shift to a "choice of eternity" at the novel's end functions as less of a rejection of the "choice of life" motif than as an anxious anticipation of speculation's inexorable historical fate: its appropriation by the working class.

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<sup>135</sup> For more on this important historical distinction, see Ralf Dahrendorf *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959.

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